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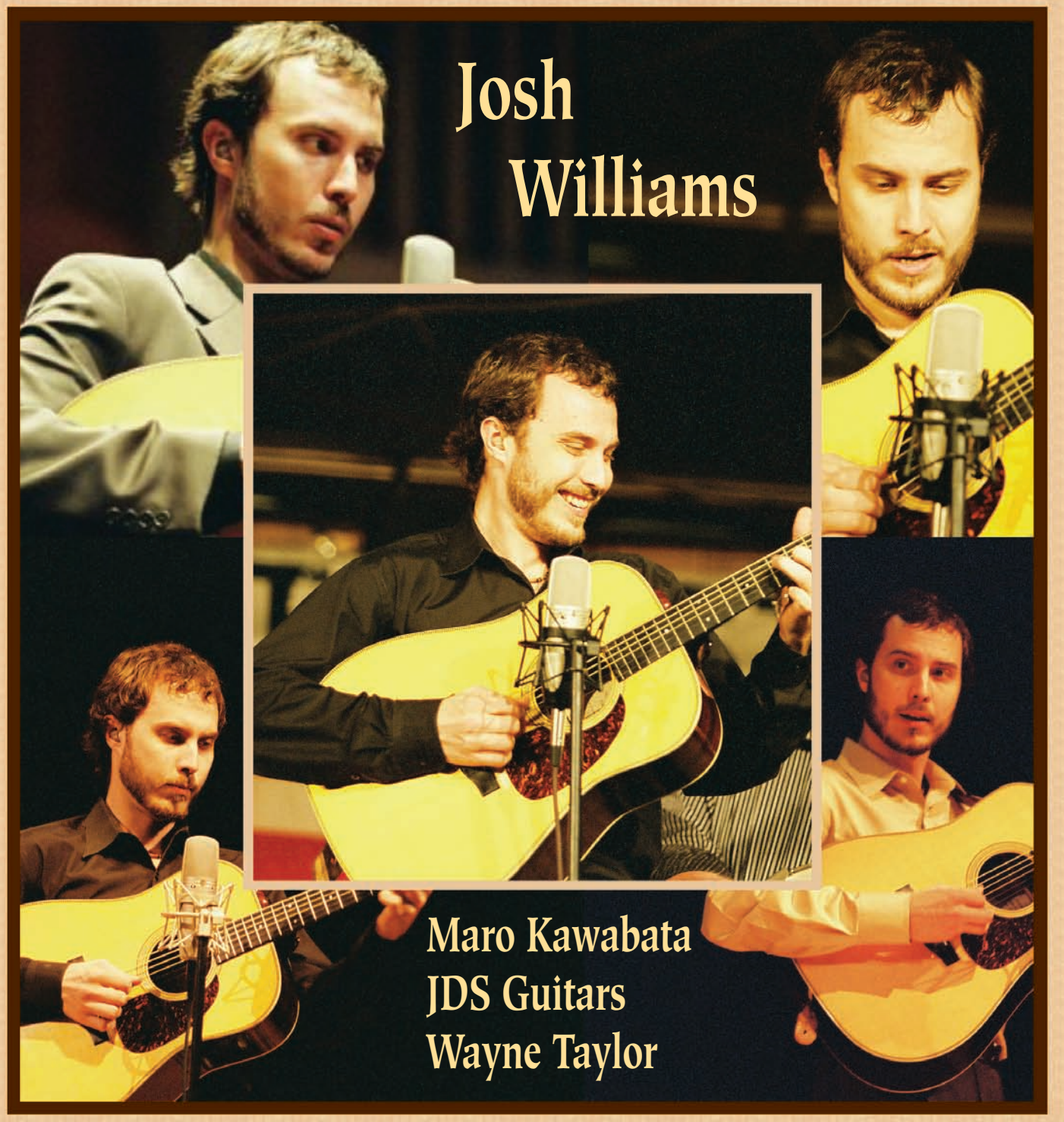

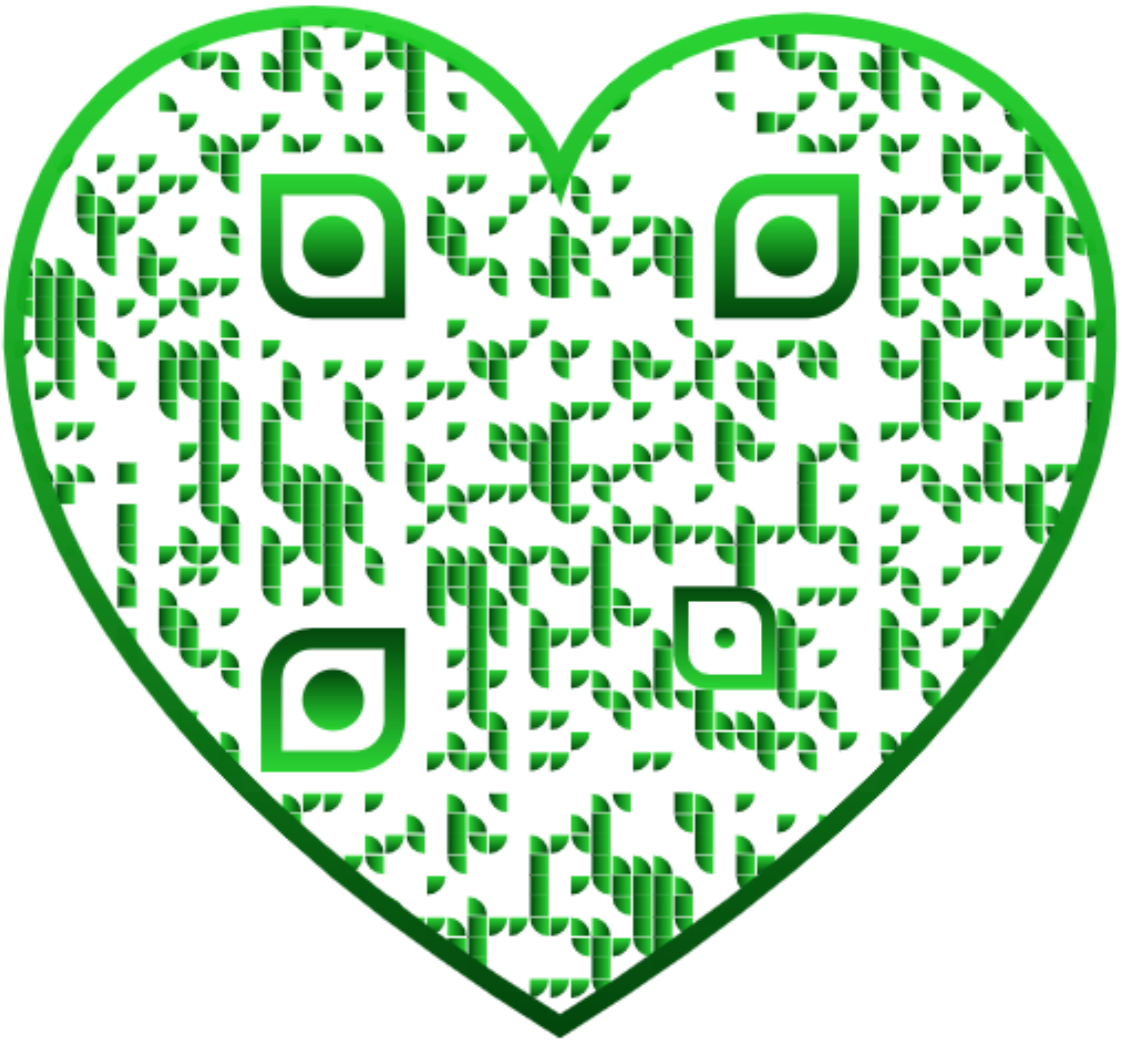

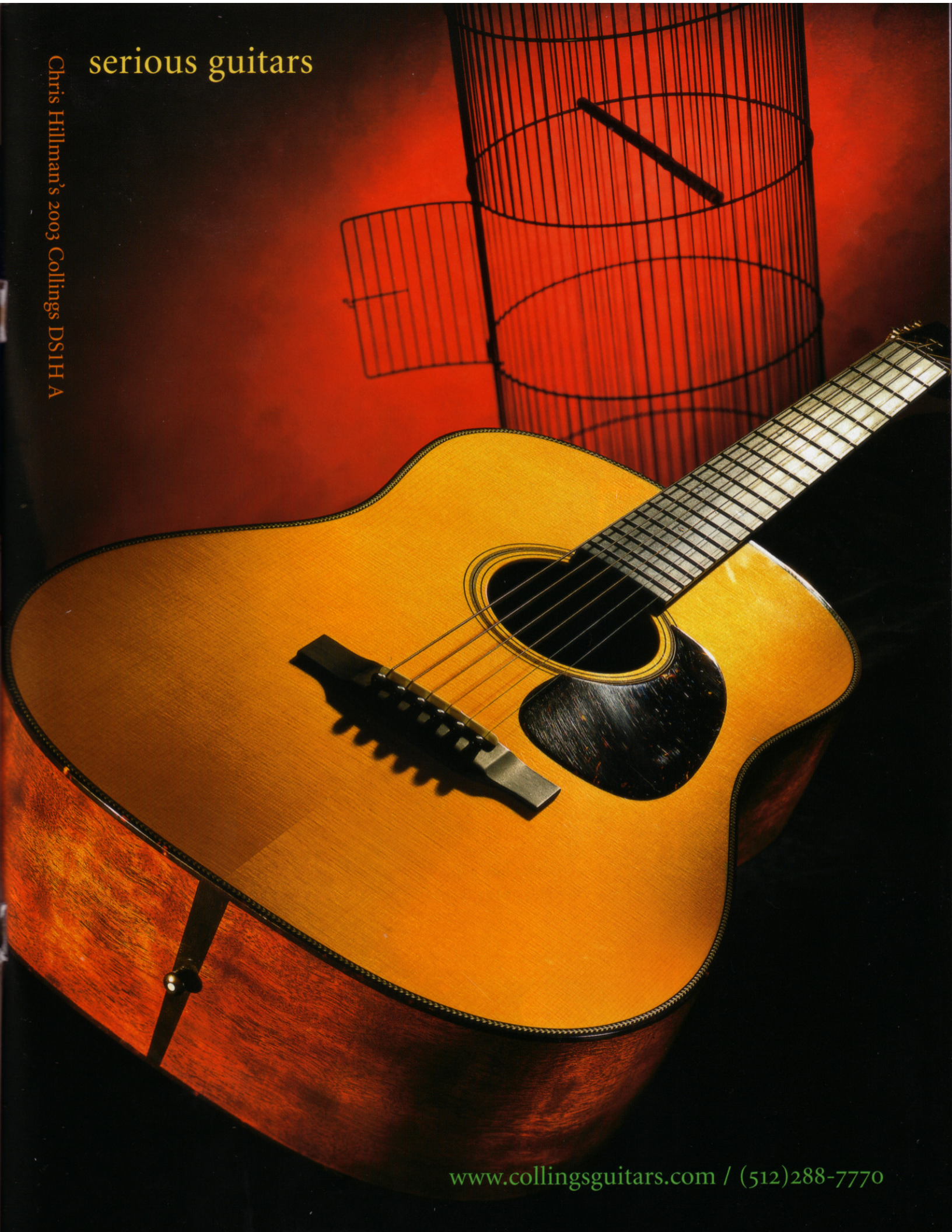
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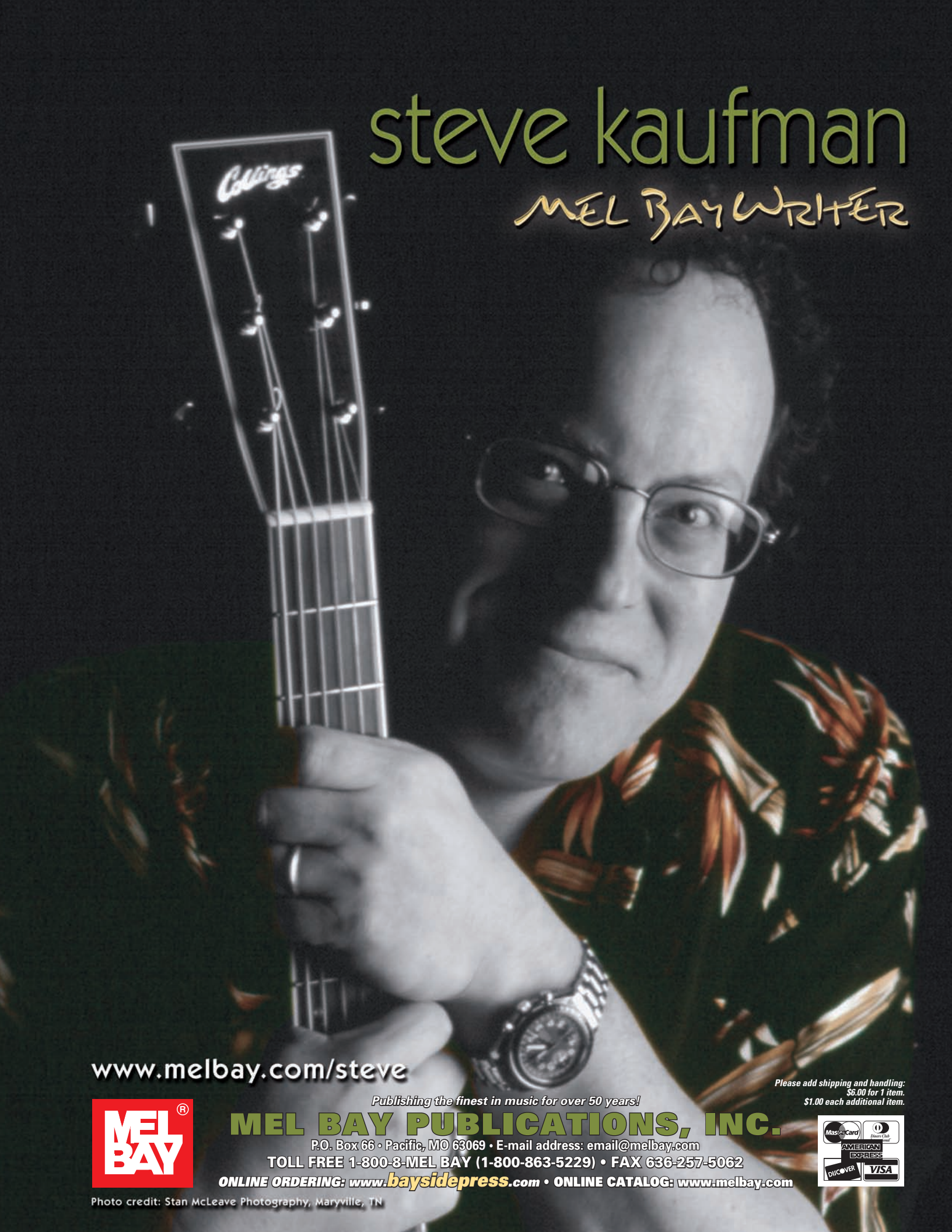
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CONTENTS

FEATURES

Josh Williams: "Blue Moonshine" **4**
Jerrry Shadrick & JDS Guitars **27**
Flatpick Profile: Maro Kawabata "Dan River" **36**
Letters **40**
Working with Physical Limitations by Joe Carr **41**

COLUMNS

"Texas Gales" **12**
Craig Vance
Flatpick Rhythm: "Faded Love" **14**
Joe Carr
Beginner's Page: Triad Positions **16**
Dan Huckabee
Maintenance & Repair **19**
Frank Ford
Kaufman's Corner: "Old Spinning Wheel" Part II **21**
Steve Kaufman
Taking It To The Next Level: Texas Swing Rhythm **24**
John Carlini
Nashville Flattop: "Sophie" **30**
Brad Davis
Break Time: "Little Cabin Home on the Hill" **32**
Joe Carr
Gypsy Jazz Guitar: "Minor Swing" Part IV **38**
Paul Mehling
The O-Zone: "Dark Hollow" **42**
Orrin Star
Sharpening the Axe: Learning Standard Notation **44**
Jeff Troxel
"Clinch Mountain Backstep" **47**
Dix Bruce
Music Theory: "New Five Cents" **50**
Mike Maddux
Gospel Guitar: "Faith of our Fathers" **55**
Harold Streeter
"Song for Marcel" **60**
Bill Bay
Flatpicking Fiddle Tunes: Royce Campbell **63**
Adam Granger
Eclectic Acoustic: Crosspicking & "Nine Pound Hammer" **65**
John McGann
Tunes and Variations, Continued **68**
Dan Crary

DEPARTMENTS

CD Highlight: Wayne Taylor: Buffalo Shoals **69**
Reviews **73**

How to Duplicate & Promote an Acoustic CD Release

1. **Send your music to radio.** No matter how you define your goals, you need to get your music to folk radio. One excellent way to do this is through a **radio-oriented sampler CD program**, such as the OASISACOUSTIC™ sampler CDs, which get the music of Oasis clients to hundreds of key radio stations throughout the U.S.

2. **Find distribution.** When people hear your music on the radio and want to buy the CD, will they be able to find it? If you make your CD with Oasis, they will. Here's why: Oasis clients automatically qualify for national distribution through Valley Media, the nation's largest full-line distributor. This means your CD is automatically available at all of the biggest Internet music stores: CDnow, Amazon.com, Music Boulevard, TotalE.com, etc. Your CD is also available for special-order distribution in all the big retail chains: Borders, Camelot, etc.

3. **Think "retail-friendly" when packaging your CD.** Your CD needs to look as good as it sounds. While jewel-box packaging is still very popular, as an alternative you may want to consider eye-catching **cardboard substitutes for the jewel box.** such as the patented **Oasis Jewel-Free™ Box**.

4. **Work with a reputable duplication company:**

• **Ask for references.** Who are the company's clients? Do they include artists and labels you respect? (Oasis is proud of our work, for example, with Trout Fishing in America, David Wilcox, Trapezoid, Chris Smither, Brooks Williams, Steven King, Salamander Crossing...)

• **Do they understand your music and your market?** If you're going to Kerrville for the first time, do they understand what this means? If your guitar sounds too tinny, do they know how to fix it? Nerissa Nields (The Nields) says "We love dealing with a company that knows and cares who we are. Oasis is fantastic; they manufactured our CDs in time to make sure we had them for our CD release at the Iron Horse. And the quality is superb."

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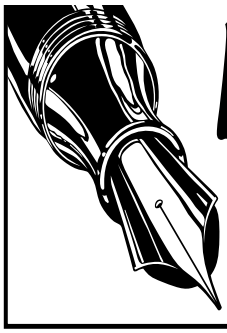


EDITOR'S PAGE

Flatpicking Duo Contest

The deadline for submitting your entries to the flatpicking duo contest is rapidly approaching. You should be receiving this issue during the first week in September and you need to have those entries in by the end of October. Its time to wrap them up and mail them in! We already have some great submissions, but we'd love to have a lot more. Get together with your favorite picking partner and send us something! (see the ad on page 59 for more info).

As I've emphasized all along in the promotion this contest, its purpose is really not to 'see who is best', but simply to give you and a picking partner some motivation to get together, work on a tune, experience the recording process, listen with a critical ear to your playing, and have a lot of fun. So even if you don't think you have a chance of winning, go through the process and send us something, it will help your playing!

I received an email a few months ago from a subscriber who told me that he and his son were working on a tune to submit to our contest. He said that although he and his son had both played the guitar for a while, they had never played much together. This contest gave them a reason to sit down and pick together. To me, that was a great story because that is what this contest is about. If we've accomplished nothing by promoting this contest but getting that man and his son together to play music, then it was worth the effort.

Welcome Jeff Troxel

A year or so ago we ran and article about the reigning Winfield champ Jeff Troxel. Recently Jeff contacted me with an interest in writing for *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. Having conducted the interview and written the article about Jeff, I knew of his extensive background both as a serious student of music and as a music teacher, not to mention his awesome picking abilities. It is our honor to welcome another Berklee College of Music graduate to our roster of fine columnists! I think that Jeff's articles will be both challenging and rewarding to those readers who are serious about moving beyond their current ability level in terms of straight flatpicking and overall musicianship. Welcome Jeff!

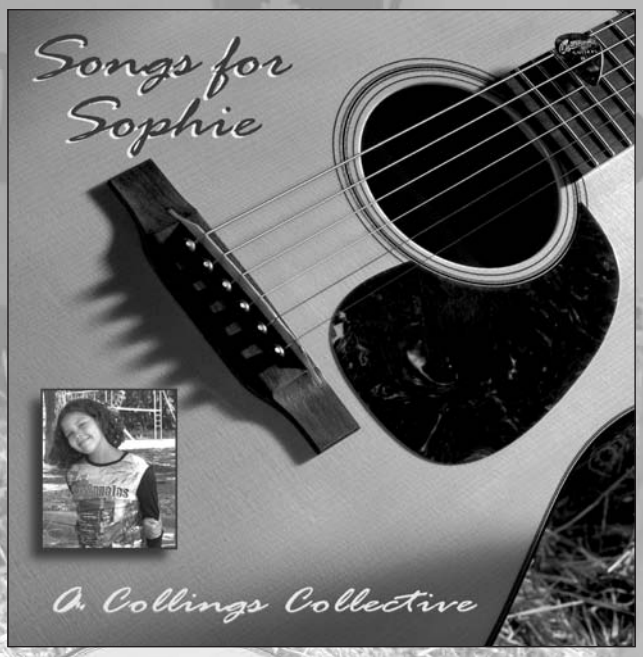
Congratulations to John McGann

Speaking of Berklee graduates...another of our Berklee grad columnists, John McGann, recently accepted a teaching position at the renowned school. He is now an Associate Professor there and, among other duties, he teaches a Bluegrass Guitar Lab, Django Lab, and Celtic Music Ensemble. Congratulations John! And congratulations Berklee for placing more emphasis on acoustic music!

FGM Records Presents:

Songs for Sophie: A Collings Collective

When you gather together some of the world's best musicians, playing some of the world's finest acoustic instruments, and they play from their heart to support a great cause, the result is nothing short of musical magic.



Songs for Sophie: A Collings Collective is a special recording project whereby some of the most talented musicians in acoustic music have volunteered their time and talent to help a very special girl, Sophie McCreary, and her family. Sophie is currently ten years old and has early onset bipolar disorder. [For more information about Sophie, please visit: http://www.anm.com/sophie/.] Sophie's dad, Steve McCreary, is the general manager of Collings Guitars, Inc. of Austin, Texas.

All of the musicians who have contributed to this project own and play Collings instruments and used those instruments—guitars and mandolins—on this recording. Each musician eagerly contributed to this project (without pay), not only because it was to benefit a good cause, but because of the love they have for their Collings instruments and the company that makes them.

When you gather together some of the world's best musicians, playing some of the world's finest acoustic instruments, and they play from their heart to support a great cause, the result is nothing short of musical magic. All proceeds from this recording go directly to help offset the high costs of Sophie's care. By purchasing this CD, you are helping a wonderful family who is an integral part of the larger musical family to which we all belong. If you feel inspired to lend more help to Sophie, please visit the above mentioned website and navigate to the "What To Do" page.

Song & Artist List:

1. **Sophie** Brad Davis
2. **Burdock Root** Matthew Arcara
3. **Guardian Angels** Keith Sewell
4. **In His Eyes** Kenny & Amanda Smith
5. **Good Medicine** Mark Cosgrove
6. **Missing You** Chris Hillman & Herb Pedersen
7. **The Geese in the Bog** Tim O'Brien
8. **You've Got So Much Love** Jim Lauderdale
9. **Late At Night** Dan Miller & Brad Davis
10. **Whispering Hope** Rich Brotherton
11. **Old Bud** Cody Kilby
12. **Tous Les Deux** David Doucet & Scott Fore
13. **McCreary's March** Steve Kaufman
14. **Complementary Pillow** James Nash
15. **Around the House** Chris Newman

Sophie McCreary

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Josh Williams

Josh Williams is a professional musician with a lot of experience and an impressive list of credentials. He is currently touring and recording with Rhonda Vincent and the Rage, a band at the top-most echelon of the bluegrass music industry. In terms of tour dates, CD sales, awards, and bluegrass chart appearances, this band is right up there with a select few bluegrass groups—which would include Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder, Alison Krauss & Union Station, and The Del McCoury Band. Prior to joining Rhonda Vincent, Josh toured with another nationally prominent act, Special Consensus, for five years. Before that he was out in front of his own highly successful Kentucky-based band, Josh Williams and High Gear. That band, which was together in various configurations for nearly nine years, became a favorite performing group in and around Josh's hometown of Benton, Kentucky. High Gear cut two CDs for the Copper Creek label. His band prior to High Gear, the Kentucky Youngin's, performed regularly for two years at the Kentucky Opry. When he was thirteen years old Josh also performed onstage at the IBMA awards show with fellow teens Cody Kilby, Chris Thile, Mike Cleveland, and Brody Stogdill as the Bluegrass Youth All-Stars, a band IBMA President Pete Wernick had put together for the show. With a different configuration of that band and working under the name Young Acoustic All-Stars, Josh performed for a summer at Opryland on the C. F. Martin stage, and cut a CD for Nashville's New Haven Records. In addition to the band projects, Josh has also recorded three solo CDs (two of them on Pinecastle Records), and is currently working on a third.

Written by Dan Miller

To recap, Josh Williams has been performing on stage as a professional musician for nearly 15 years. He has played with some of the best bands in the business at some of the most prominent venues in the country. He has recorded on over a half a dozen band projects, recorded three solo projects, and is becoming a highly sought after session musician—and we have yet to mention anything about his talents as a multi-instrumentalist and songwriter, or his years of success as a contest player. His career to date would be considered a highly successful one for any bluegrass music professional. The amazing part of this story, however, is that Josh has accomplished all of this prior to his 25th birthday.

If you do the math you will know that Josh was playing professionally in bluegrass bands by the time he was ten. So there is no doubt that he must have started learning how to play music at a young age. The exact

age was 5 and his first instrument was an electronic keyboard. Josh said, "I messed around with the keyboard, but I never really got into it." Josh's grandmother, who lived next-door to his family's home in Benton, Kentucky, had learned how to play music from Josh's great-grandmother. She played guitar, mandolin, and ukulele. She had both a baritone and tenor ukulele at her house and, at the age of 5, Josh became interested in that instrument. After his grandmother showed him how to play a few chords on the tenor uke, Josh abandoned the keyboard. Before his sixth birthday, Josh's dad also showed him how to play a few chords on the guitar, however, Josh said, "I struggled with the guitar because it was so big."

For the next few years Josh dabbled with the ukulele and the guitar, but it wasn't until he was eight years old and heard the five-string banjo that he says, "the fire was set under my tail." Josh recalls his introduction to the banjo, "It was only me and my dad at the house and he was in the shower. I was watching television and Hee Haw came on. They had this segment where Roni Stoneman and Mike Snider were playing banjos together, just the two of them. I started screaming 'Dad, come here! Hurry!' My dad jumped out of the shower, wrapped a towel around himself and ran in. From the way I was screaming, he assumed that mom had left some grease on the stove and there was a fire in the kitchen. I was mesmerized, staring at the television. He said, 'What are you doing?' I pointed to the TV and said, 'That is what I want to play!'" With that kind of enthusiasm how could a father say "no"? Josh's dad had a friend, Scottie Henson, who played banjo and taught lessons. He bought Josh a banjo and signed him up to take lessons with Scottie.

Josh recalls that during his first lesson Scottie recognized that it wasn't going to take long for him to learn how to play this instrument. Josh said, "During the first lesson Scottie taught me the basic rolls and then taught me to play a song that he had written called 'Wind River.' He later told me that it was the first time that he had taught a student how to play a song at the first lesson." Usually the students struggled with the rolls for a while before Scottie would teach them how to play a tune. Josh picked up the rolls so quickly, that he added the song as an extra challenge.

Although he seemed to have a natural talent for the banjo, Josh said that he would never have picked it up so quickly (he was playing on stage at the Kentucky Opry by the age of 9) if it weren't for family friend Ricky Culp. Ricky was a carpenter and for several months worked daily on the Williams' home. He was also a banjo player and volunteered to help Josh everyday after he finished his carpentry work. Josh said, "That helped me a lot because he gave me support and made me want to practice harder. Scottie was the closest to Earl Scruggs on the banjo that there was in that area of Kentucky and Ricky was able to break it down for me. That helped a lot." Between the daily sessions with Ricky Culp and the weekly lessons with Scottie Henson (which lasted three years), Josh progressed rapidly on the banjo. Josh had the additional support of his father. Josh recalls, "Dad owned all of the Flatt & Scruggs albums. Every night, after I started to show interest in the music, we'd sit and listen to those records."

Josh's first time performing on stage came at the request of Ricky Culp. Ricky's group was performing at the Kentucky Opry, a local venue that typically drew 50 to 100 people in for each show. Ricky asked Josh if he would come up on stage and perform "Foggy Mountain Top" with the band. Josh recalls, "I got up on stage and tried to play a couple of breaks, but I never quite got through it. I was really nervous." Although he thought he had performed terribly, Ricky was very encouraging. Josh said, "Ricky told me, 'You showed me that you know exactly where you are at in a song and that you know timing, because no matter where you dropped out you were able to pick it back up and finish right along with the band.' "

Although banjo would remain Josh's main instrument for the next ten years, he said, "Once I had a good feel for the banjo I decided to move back over to the guitar as well. My Dad had a 1939 Martin 0-17 that was his 'baby'. He and my mom sang Ian & Sylvia and other folkie-type stuff. He put some Grover tuners and steel strings on the old Martin so that I could play it bluegrass style." Josh had learned some chords from his dad, but said, "Dad didn't know a lot of the lead stuff and didn't know much more than the basic major and minor chords, so Ricky helped me a lot with the guitar."

In addition to helping Josh learn how to play the banjo and guitar, Ricky Culp also helped him learn how to play that mandolin. Josh said, "My Uncle Reg is a fiddle player. He gave me a cheap Hondo II A-style mandolin. I was able to hear the melody of songs and pick them out, but I didn't know much beyond the two finger chords. Ricky knew the full chords and showed those to me."

By the time Josh was ten years old he was playing in two different bands. The first band consisted of Ricky Culp (mandolin) and his wife Kelly (guitar) with Josh (banjo) and his dad (bass). The band called themselves KC and the Boys. At about the same time, Josh joined a youth band that Clay Campbell,

Josh Williams on stage with Jimmy Martin in 1993

Josh Williams with the Young Acoustic All-Stars

the owner of the Kentucky Opry, formed. Josh again played banjo with that group and was joined by Clay Campbell's son, Clayton (fiddle), Jamie Jamison on guitar, and Dennis Lewis on bass. Both bands played at various functions around town. The highlight for KC and the Boys was opening a show for Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys at the Lucy Opry in Memphis. Josh said that each of those bands stayed together for about two years.

After his first two bands broke up, Josh formed a new band with Jamie Jamison. A bass player was supposed to have joined them for their first gig, but he never showed. Josh and Jamie performed that gig as a duo. A short time later a new bass player, Doug Shimwell, joined them and they named the group High Gear. At first the group performed "mostly for fun," but later (after Tim Harmon joined them on mandolin and Dwayne Waller on fiddle) they began getting some notice and better bookings. A booking at the Lucy Opry in Memphis to open for Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver billed the band as Josh Williams and the High Gear Band. The name stuck. This configuration of the group recorded the CD *The Old Town of Home*, which was released on Copper Creek Records. Josh was eleven when the CD was recorded and twelve when it was released. However, this was not his first recording. Two years earlier, when he was ten, Josh recorded and released a banjo instrumental CD under his own name. Joining him on the project were Ricky and Kelly Culp, Kenneth Turner (bass), Jim Nicholas (mandolin), and Kirk Brandenberger (fiddle). That CD was titled *Tall Pickin'*.

Shortly after releasing his first solo CD; Josh attended a Pete Wernick banjo camp. Josh said, "Pete took a liking to me and started helping me out. He broke some things down for me that I was having trouble with. It was some of the small, intricate stuff that I was trying to get but wasn't doing quite right. He understands the Earl Scruggs style and he taught me things that made it easier for me to understand."

As a result of Josh's relationship with Pete Wernick he was recruited to play with a group Pete was putting together to perform at the 1993 IBMA awards show. The group, called the Bluegrass Youth All-Stars, included Chris Thile on mandolin, Cody Kilby on guitar, Josh on banjo, Mike Cleveland on fiddle, and Brady Stogdill on bass. The group rehearsed for the show and performed two songs on stage—Bill Monroe's "Wheel Hoss" and "Heavy Traffic Ahead"—with Josh singing lead and Chris Thile singing tenor. The crowd went crazy.

The five musicians got to know each other and had a chance to "hang around and become friends." Actually, Josh and Cody Kilby already knew each other from the contest circuit. Josh said, "Cody and I grew up playing contests against each other. We both entered guitar, banjo, and mandolin contests. We were each other's biggest competitors. But, in all honesty, Cody usually whooped me. There were a very few times that I actually beat Cody."

After the Youth All-Stars performed at the IBMA awards show, New Haven Records expressed interest in recording the group. Chris Thile had other commitments and Cody Kilby also left the band. Jonathan Jones came in to play banjo, Josh moved over to mandolin, and Brady Stogdill moved over to the guitar spot. Later Brady Stogdill's dad was diagnosed with cancer and so he also left the band. Joey Gibson came in to play bass and Wade Butler filled the guitar spot. This group recorded for New Haven under the name Young Acoustic All-Stars. Mike Cleveland stayed long enough to record two tunes for the CD and was then replaced by Katie Penn on fiddle for the remainder of the cuts. This configuration of the band also spent a summer performing at Opryland on the C.F. Martin stage opposite Little Jimmy Dickens. Josh said, "We played three days a week and got paid $100 a day. That is not bad when you are thirteen years old! By the end of the summer we were all ready to kill each other though. It all fell apart after that."

While performing with the Young Acoustic All-Stars, Josh also continued to perform with High Gear when he was back home in Kentucky. After a few personnel changes (Jamie left and was replaced by Shayne Freeland and then Doug left and was replaced by Ron Barnet) the band changed their name to Josh Williams and High Gear. Eventually Shayne Freeland left and was replaced by David Oliver. When Josh was 16, in 1997, the band cut their second CD for Copper Creek, a gospel project titled *Come To That River*. Josh and Benny Morton wrote the CD's title cut. Josh Williams and High Gear continued to perform together until 1999. The band gave their farewell performance in Benton, Kentucky, in May of that year. The band had been together, in their various configurations, for nearly ten years and developed into one of the best bands in the region. The city of Benton gave them all awards after their last show.

In January 1999 Josh auditioned for the mandolin job in the Chicago-based band Special Consensus, which included Greg Cahill on banjo, Jamie Clifton on guitar, and Jim Dishman on bass. He got the job, but he was only able to play with the band on weekends through the winter and spring while he finished his last year of high school. While with that band he performed on both the mandolin and the fiddle (he had started learning how to play the fiddle when he was 16).

While with Special Consensus Josh recorded on two of their project, their 25th anniversary project and their CD *Route 10*. When asked about his experience with that band, Josh said, "I learned a lot from Greg Cahill. The way we played off of each other, matched up our parts, and workout the harmonies gave me a lot of great experience. Greg gave me the opportunity to be the lead singer in the band, which helped out my singing abilities." Josh said that the highlight of his Special Consensus years was appearing with the band at the Grand Old Opry in November of 2003. It was the band's first appearance on the show.

Josh stayed with Special Consensus for a total of five years. In the fall of 2003 he was riding to the airport with the other guys in the band when his cell phone rang. He picked it up and the voice on the other end said, "Josh, this is Rhonda Vincent. I'm looking for a guitar player who can sing." Josh did not know Rhonda Vincent well. He had filled in for her on fiddle one time (at the recommendation of his friend Kirk Brandenberger), but that was about the extent of his relationship with her. When the guitar spot in her band opened up his friend Cody Kilby had recommended to Rhonda that Josh would be a good candidate for that job.

Josh was in Chicago at the time Rhonda called. She flew him to Nashville to audition with the band. Josh said, "I knew Hunter Barry and Mickey Harris and I'd known of Kenny Ingram for a long time, but had only met him once back when I was eleven or twelve. I was at a contest and Kenny was there with a band that had entered the band contest. I remember asking him why he didn't clean his banjo. He looked at me over his glasses and said, 'Son, when they sound this good you don't mess with them.' He really intimidated me."

Josh met the band at a hotel in Nashville where Rhonda was staying. He played a few songs with them and Rhonda said, "That's all I need." Josh said, "I felt like I hadn't done well and I told her 'I've been playing mandolin and fiddle.' She said, 'That's alright.' We went down to the breakfast area in the hotel and talked about it. She offered me the job, but said that she wanted me to think it over before I gave her an answer." As we now know, Josh said, "Yes." He started playing guitar with Rhonda Vincent and the Rage in late October of 2003. His last show with Special Consensus was in December of 2003.

Special Consensus

When asked if it took him a while to get his guitar chops back, Josh said, "I'm still working on it!" He said it was kind of rough at first. He had not played the guitar professionally very much in his career—it had all been banjo, mandolin, or fiddle. To jump into the fire of one of the hottest bluegrass bands in the world was quite a challenge. Josh said, "I think that Rhonda was getting a little frustrated in the beginning because the guitar wasn't coming out clean. Kenny Ingram told Rhonda, 'Give him six months and he'll get a lot better on the guitar.' The banjo had been my main instrument for ten years, then I played the mandolin and fiddle for five."

In order to help him get his guitar chops back Josh said that he got the metronome out and worked on his rhythm playing. He said, "Being in Special Consensus with Jamie Clifton helped because I had heard his rhythm. I worked to play rhythm similar to Jamie. I practiced with a metronome and with Rhonda's records, which mostly had Bryan Sutton on them. I had some badass solos to learn! I was listening to those CDs all of the time."

Looking back on his preparation, Josh said, "Playing with the CDs and playing with the guys in the band was different. When you are with the band they are relying on you. So I found out that the best way to learn how to do it was to just do it. We all work together well and the more we play together, the better the show gets. It helps

Josh Williams performing with Special Consensus at the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas

Josh Williams performing with Rhonda Vincent

that we are performing together so often. It is all done by feel up there on stage and when we are out playing 180 to 200 shows a year you get to know what you are doing. I'm still working on it. I'm still working to develop my style on the guitar. Audie Blaylock [Rhonda's guitar player prior to Josh] is a great musician, so I had some big shoes to fill."

Josh admits that his greatest challenge has been the right hand. He says, "When I first started with the band I was trying to play the guitar with the habits I had from playing mandolin. But the guitar is different, so it has taken me a while to correct myself. I am always working on it and trying to learn more. I believe that if a musician is not still learning something everyday, they should just put up the instrument. I know for a fact that that day will never come for me."

When questioned about specific points that he is currently focusing on to improve his playing, Josh said, "I'm working on moving from playing rhythm into playing the solo and then back into rhythm. I'm trying to make those transitions smooth and in time. I am also working on my speed and working to make every pick stroke strong and in time. I'm also always working on my right hand technique."

Regarding his progress on the guitar over the past year and a half, Josh points to the band's banjo player Kenny Ingram as being the "most beneficial and important thing." He said, "Sammy Shelor told me that a good guitar player will play off of the banjo. I never really understood that until I started playing with Kenny. My dynamics come from anticipating what Kenny is going to do on the banjo. I try to match whatever he is doing rhythmically. I will change what I am doing on guitar to match his rolls. It is very hard to explain, but easy to show. Whenever I do a guitar workshop I have to bring Kenny with me so that I can demonstrate how my dynamics change to match what he is doing." Josh added that he feels like his having spent years playing the banjo helps him in this process. He said, "I think it is easier for me to guess what he is going to do here or there because I understand the banjo."

Rhonda Vincent and the Rage's newest projects are from a live band performance, which has been released on both DVD and CD by Rounder Records. Josh was a part of that show. Regarding his role in the project, and in the band, Josh said that when he first came into the band he was coming from being the lead singer in Special Consensus and felt like he might simply be set in the background as a member of Rhonda's band, but that has not been the case. He said, "Rhonda features everyone in the band and she depends on us all. We all work together and rely on each other. When someone is missing it leaves a huge hole." Josh points to the fact that the new live project features eight songs that Rhonda had never recorded before as proof of Rhonda's confidence in the band. He said, "She knew that the band could handle it."

In addition to playing on the road with Rhonda Vincent, Josh also has maintained a solo career that he launched in 2001 with the release of his CD *Now That You've Gone* on Pinecastle Records. Regarding that recording, Josh said, "I played banjo on some of it, mandolin on about half of it, and guitar on about half. I had a lot of my heroes on that CD. Don Rigsby produced the project and J.D. Crowe played banjo. J.D. has been a good friend. He has always believed in me and done a lot for me. I have filled in with his band a few times over the years. His music is really what has inspired me to do what I do. I love his style." Other "heroes" who appear on Now That You've Gone with Josh include Ron Stewart, Don Rigsby, Randy Kohrs, Missy Raines, Jim Hurst, Chris Thile, David Parmely, Sammy Shelor, and Aubrey Haynie.

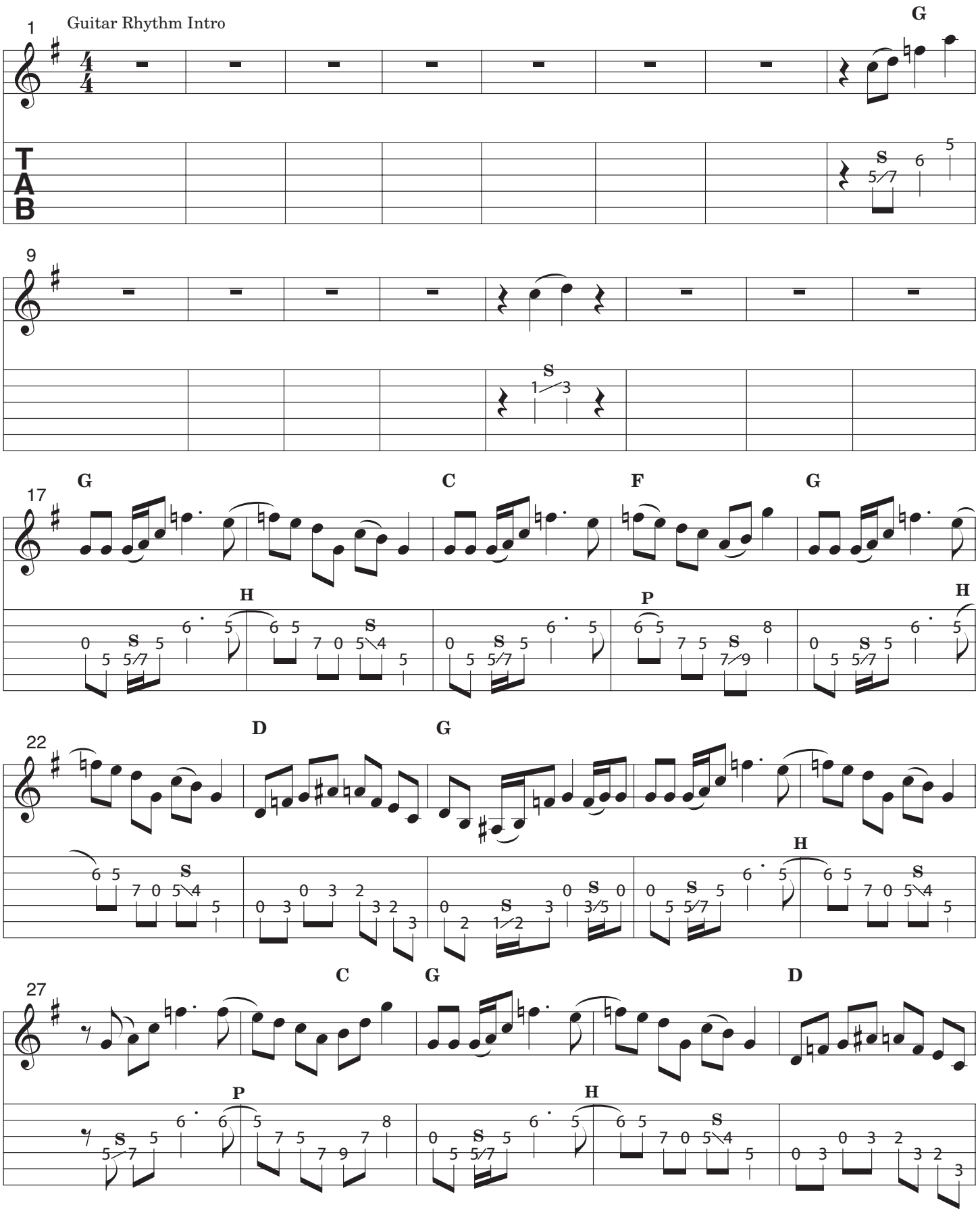
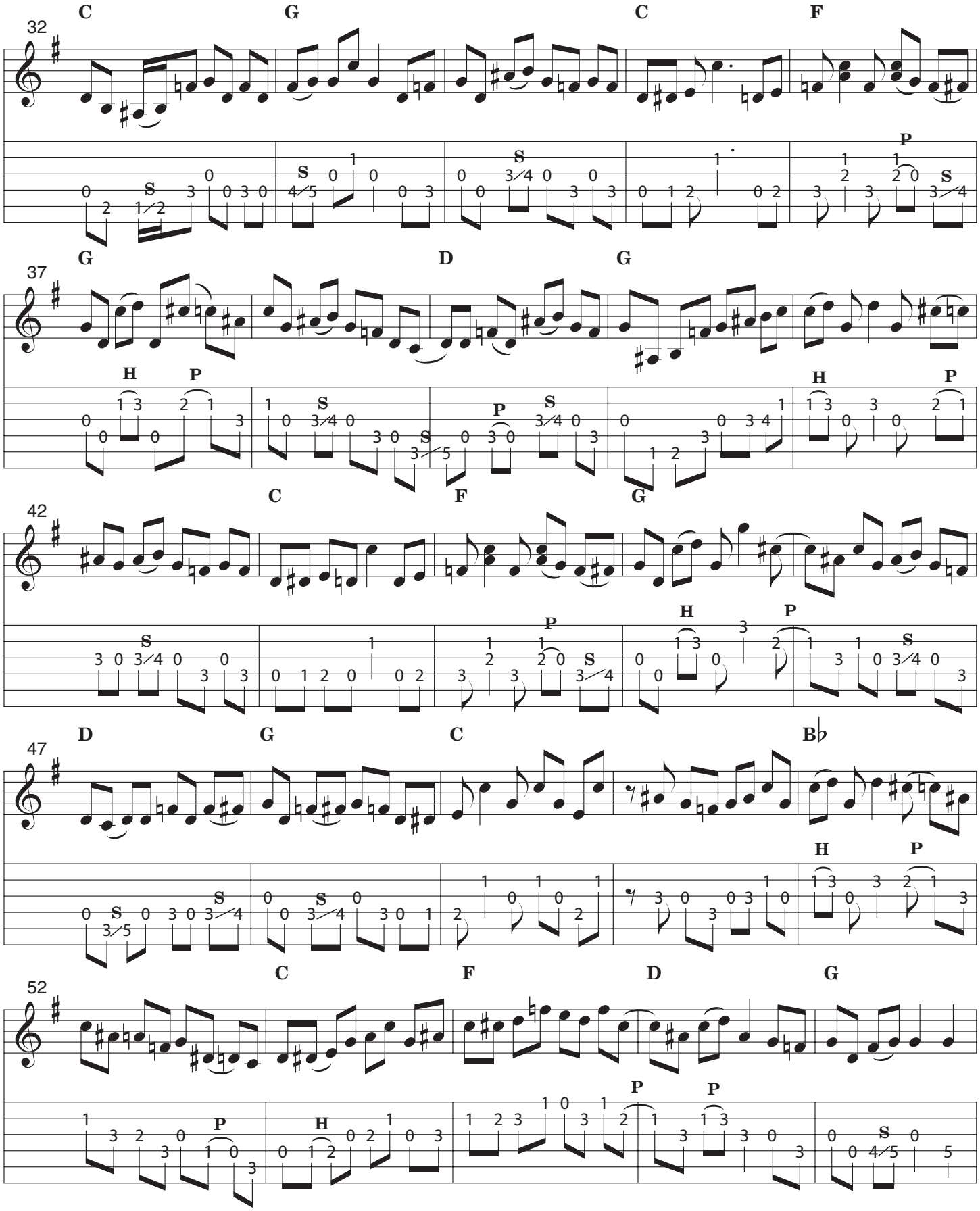
Josh completed another solo project, again on Pinecastle Records, in 2003. This project, *Lonesome Highway*, was released in 2004 shortly after Josh started playing in Rhonda's band. On this one Josh sang all lead and baritone vocals and played all guitar and mandolin parts. Others who joined him on this project were J.D. Crowe, Ron Stewart, Don Rigsby, Missy Raines, and Randy Kohrs. Plans are in the works for another solo record that Josh says will be a tribute to the music of J.D. Crowe. He says that he is still in the process of picking out the tunes for this CD.

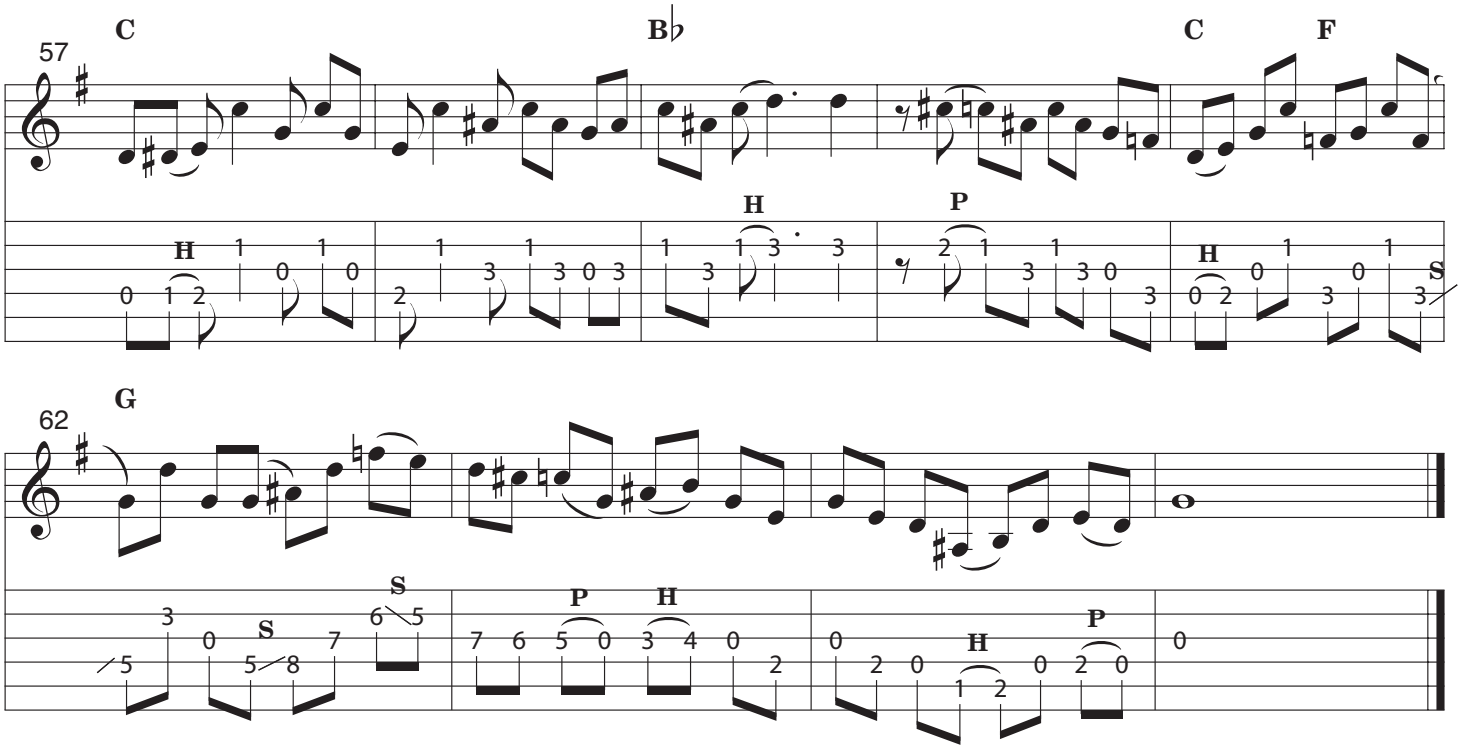
Currently Josh is playing a guitar that was custom made for him by Neil Kendrick of Frenchburg, Kentucky. It is a guitar that Josh designed, patterned after a pre-war Martin herringbone. When asked about any differenced between his guitar design and the pre-war 'bone, Josh said, "My guitar has an Engelmann spruce top instead of the red spruce and my string spacing is not quite as wide as the older Martin spacing. It is somewhere between the old spacing and the modern spacing. Also, the neck is more like a D-18 than a D-28 because it doesn't have the volute." Josh added, "Neil is one of the best builders out there right now. For me playing his guitar is the next best thing to playing a pre-war Martin."

On this issue's audio companion CD Josh and his friend Andy Falco got together at Andy's home in Nashville and recorded a song Josh wrote for the occasion called "Blue Moon Shine." We have transcribed Josh's first solo on the pages that follow.

Audio CD
Track 3

Blue Moonshine

Arranged by Josh Williams
Transcribed by Brad Davis

Blue Moonshine (con't)

Blue Moonshine (con't)



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Texas Gales

by Craig Vance

It was in the summer of 1972 when I first heard the tune "Texas Gales." I had just purchased the album *Ballads From Deep Gap*, by Doc and Merle Watson (Vanguard VSD-6576). I sat in my upstairs oven-like bedroom, literally sweating out each note of this tune. I was so intent on learning this 3-part marvel that I arrived late to the dinner table. After dinner I went straight back into the kiln to bake the rest of the tune into my brain.

Since those sultry summer days in the seventies, I have heard many other renditions of the tune, and I have taken bits from each and spliced in some of my own ideas. And here is the "Texas Gales" salad that I have tossed together for you.

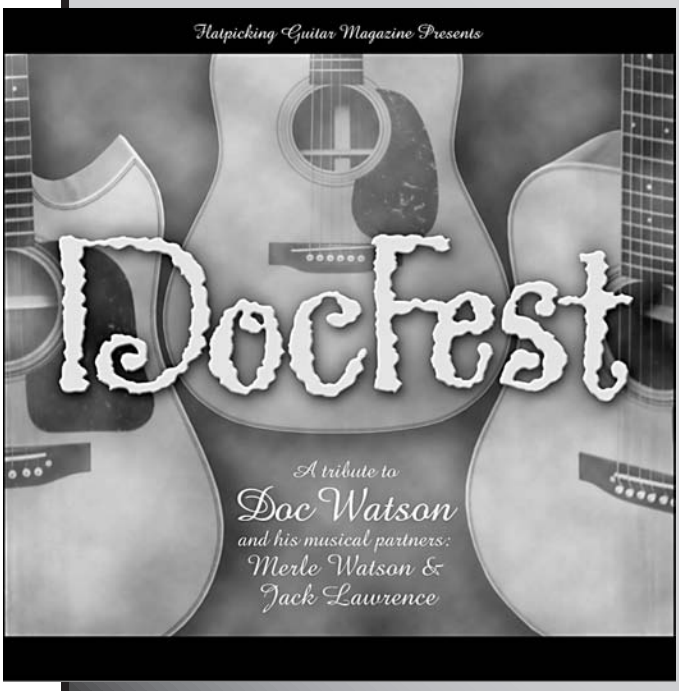
There is nothing to dread about this tune, I finally realize, as it is fairly simple in context. Just take it a section at a time until you have it all pretty well committed to memory, and then join them together. It's a great tune, and a lot of fun in jam sessions. Enjoy!

Flatpicking Guitar Magazine pays tribute to

Doc Watson, Merle Watson & Jack Lawrence

with the release of a new musical tribute CD:

This CD includes eighteen tunes by many of today's top flatpickers. Each of the artist on this project were inspired to learn the song that they perform after first hearing the song performed by Doc Watson with one of his musical partners Merle Watson or Jack Lawrence. The CD includes Fourteen Vocals Songs and Four Instrumental Tunes as follows:



Gonna Lay Down My Old Guitar (Doug Rorrer & Steve Kilby)
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Old Camp Meeting Time (Kenny & Amanda Smith)
Deep River Blues (Jim Hurst & Missy Raines)
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The Crawdad Song (Brad Davis & Dan Miller)
Rainbow (Steve Kaufman & Roy Curry)
Little Sadie (Adam Granger)
More Pretty Girls Than One (Craig Vance & Chris Leske)
Black Mountain Rag (Steve Pottier & Barry Soloman)
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Southbound (Joe Carr & Alan Munde)
Matty Groves (Larry Keel & Rushad Eggleston)

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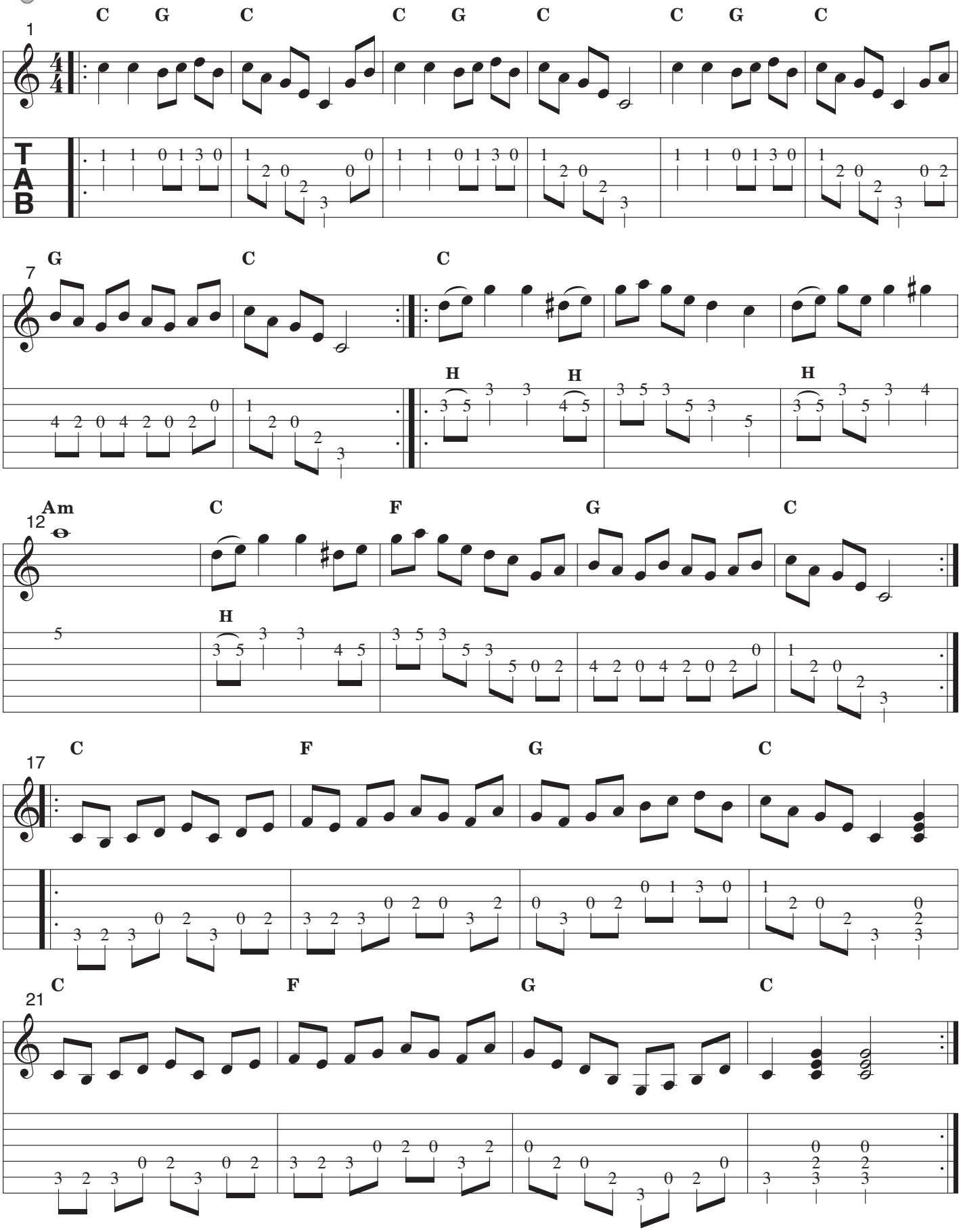
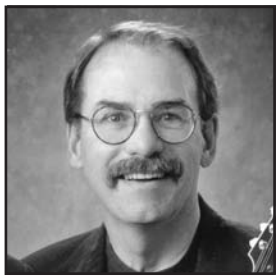
Audio CD
Track 5 & 6

Texas Gales

Capo 2

Arranged by Craig Vance

Flatpick Rhythm Guitar



by Joe Carr

Faded Love

After "San Antonio Rose", "Faded Love" is probably the most played Western swing song. In the West, it is a required tune for every fiddler. This rhythm chord arrangement of "Faded Love" is drawn from Eldon Shamblin's recording of the Western swing classic in the 1980s. The song comes from an album that was a small independent release on vinyl long-play record and cassette tape. The recording is currently unavailable. This arrangement includes many of Shamblin's essential chord shapes such as the third chord form, D7. I have written this arrangement in chord frames rather than in a standard musical staff. Each chord should be played twice except for the last four chords on line two and the G and G# diminished chords at the end.

To perform the piece, play the first twelve chord frames and then return to the beginning. The second time, play through the first eight chords and skip directly to the thirteenth chord (D) under the "2." bracket. Notice, beginning with chord six, there are fret numbers beside the frames to identify the correct placement of the chord, When there are no numbers present, the top line represents the nut of the guitar.

The first four chord frames are substitutions for the tonic "D" chord. D7 and Daug9 serve as dominant chords to "set up" the move the four chord (G). The movement from chords five through eight is a common move in Western swing. Expressed in numbers, it is: 4, 4 augmented, 6 minor, flat 3 diminished. [The 6 minor could also be seen as a one sixth chord—in this case G6] The diminished chord provides a satisfying connection back to the one chord (D). This progression is useful in any situation where there are two measures of the four chord followed by the one chord.

Chords eleven (Em9) and twelve (A13b5) serve as the "two-five" turnaround. The last four chords of the arrangement are a very effective "end-of-phrase" sequence. They are D6, G, G# diminished, D6. Notice that the lowest note of each chord is only occasionally the root. The idea in Western swing rhythm is to create a bass line that connects the chords in a pleasing way. By adding a bass-strum picking pattern to this arrangement, you can accentuate this effect.

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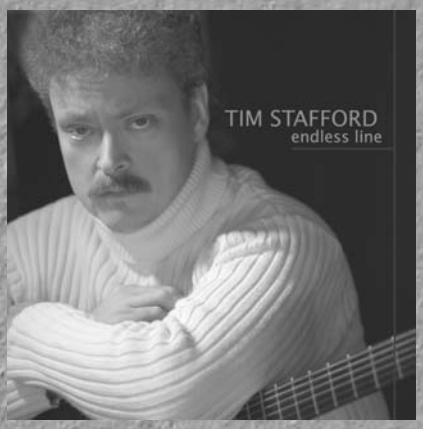

Endless Line

John Jorgenson

Franco-American Swing

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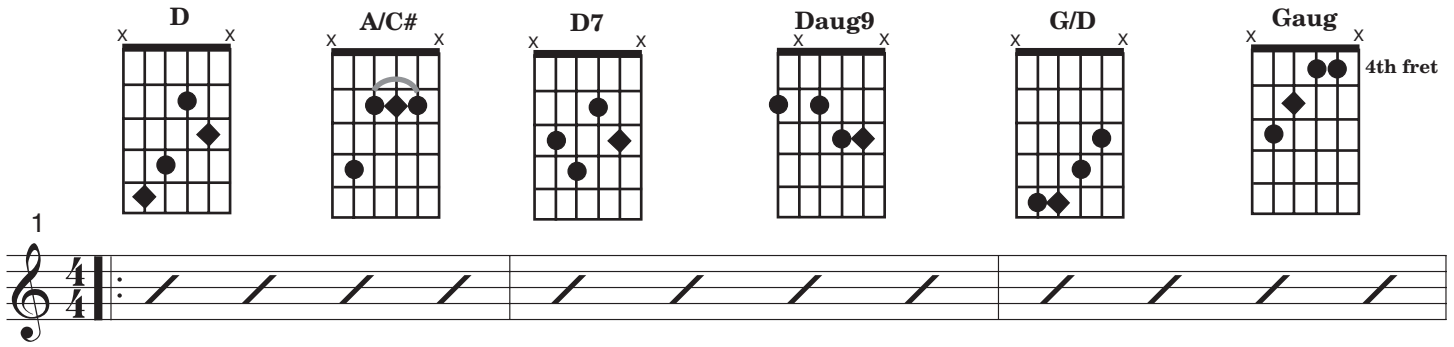
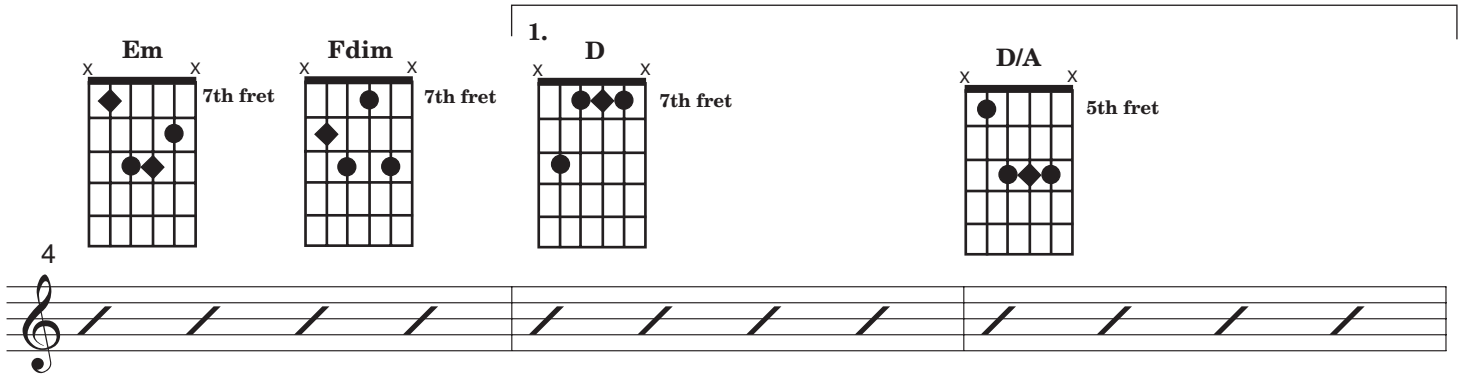
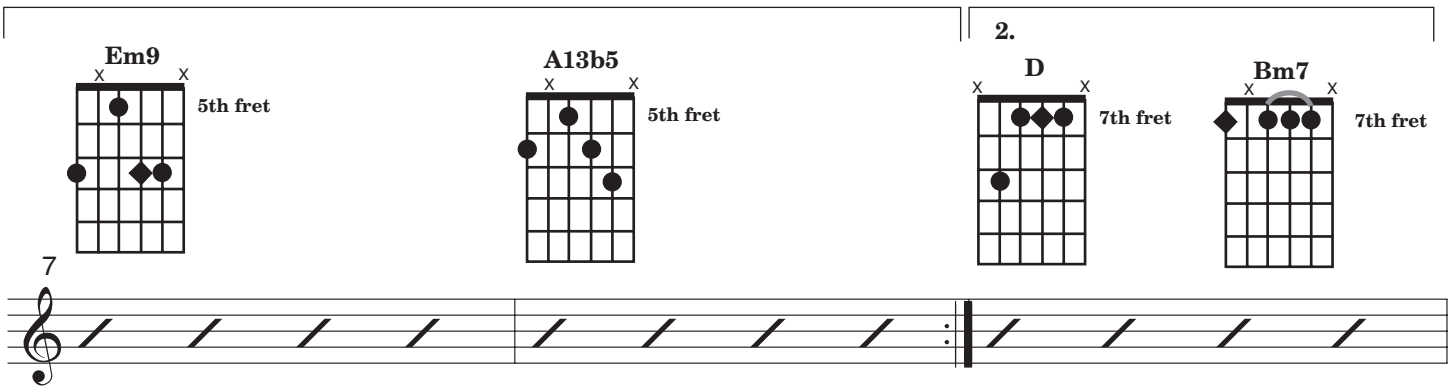
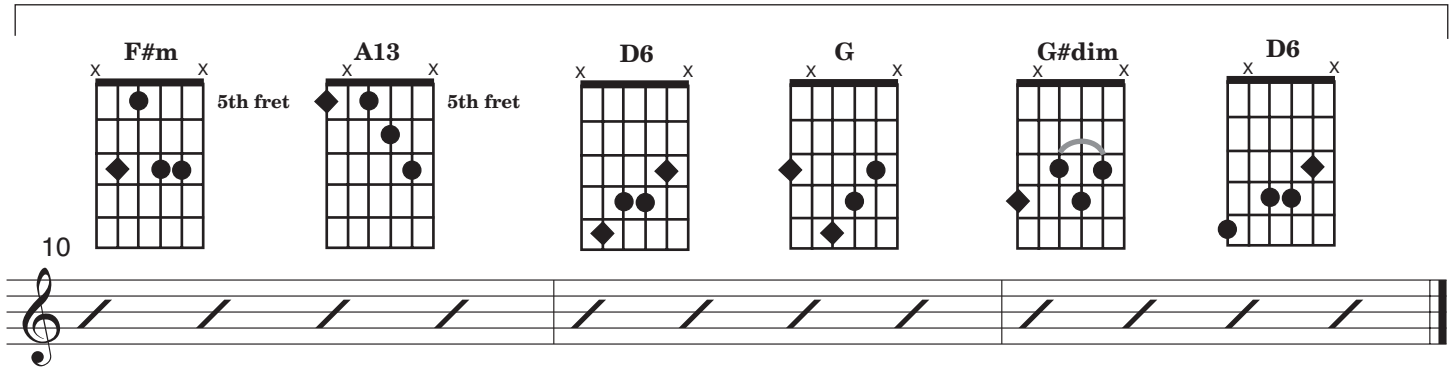
Faded Love Chords

Audio CD
Track 8









Beginner's Page

by Dan Huckabee

Triad Positions on the First Three Strings

There are three very simple chord positions that open up a world of fancy sounding (and fancy looking) flatpicking: the D-position, the F-position, and the Bb position. With these three "SHAPES" we can make thousands of fancy moves and they work for every song in the whole world. The trick is memorizing what chord D becomes when it's scooted up two frets. That's easy—it's E! F becomes G when it's scooted up two frets and Bb becomes C when it's scooted up two frets. So if you learn what chord each shape becomes at every fret, a whole world opens up.

But before we go any farther, re-read the title of this article: "Triad Positions on the First three Strings." What we are learning here are soloing concepts that take place on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd strings. In other words, we won't be strumming a chord on all six strings.

Another important thing in this lesson is that we will be crosspicking. You can strum these positions as a chord or you can crosspick these positions as individual notes known as arpeggios, and either way, they sound great!

We're going to learn two exercises. The first is a typical 1-4-5 chord progression in C covering two octaves. The second is this same exercise using the chord progression to "Salty Dog Blues."

The procedure is simple. If you know the three chord "SHAPES" and the crosspicking pattern, which is 3-2-1-2, then all you do is grab the chord at the correct fret, and play the pattern of 3rd string, 2nd string, 1st string, 2nd string, then move on to the next position.

For "Salty Dog Blues," you play the F-position at the 3rd fret, D-position at the 4th fret, F-position at the 5th fret, Bb-position at the 5th fret etc. What you have actually played is G, E, A, D but in inversions that gradually move upward on the first three strings. It's easy!

After you've learned both exercises, see if you can apply the concepts to other songs. Eventually you will know that the F position at the 8th fret is C and the D position at the 7th fret is F. It wouldn't be much fun to sit down and memorize these positions from a chart, but learning the positions in songs and chord progressions is a lot of fun and makes more musical sense. Feel free to check out our web site (www.musician-workshop.com) or call me toll free at 800-543-6125 if you have any questions.

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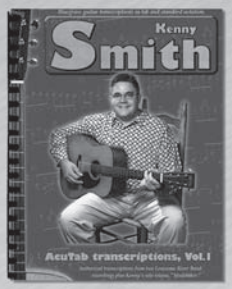

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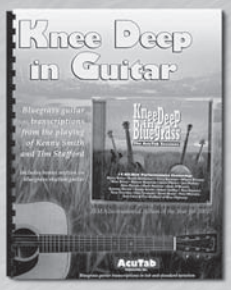

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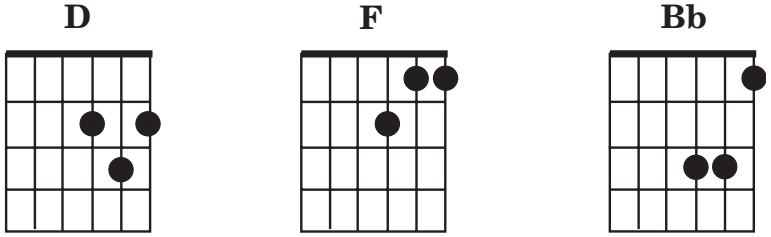
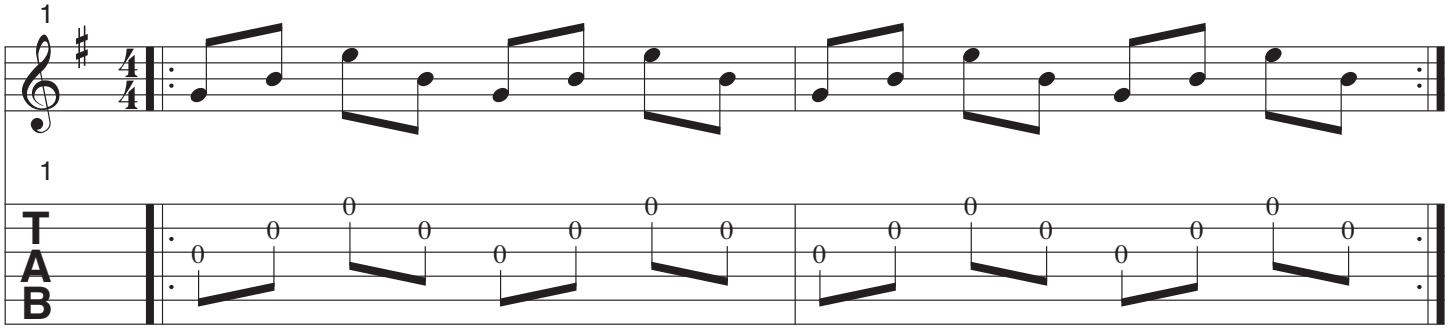
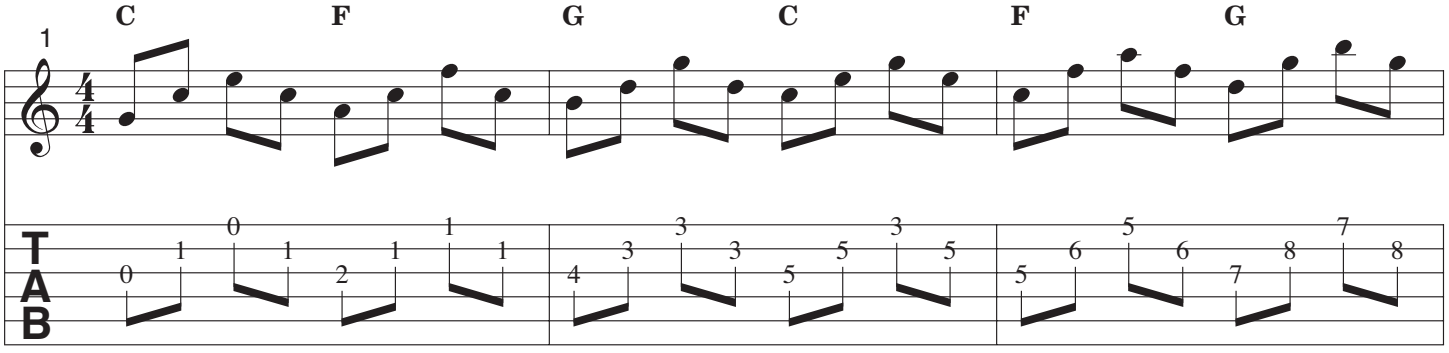


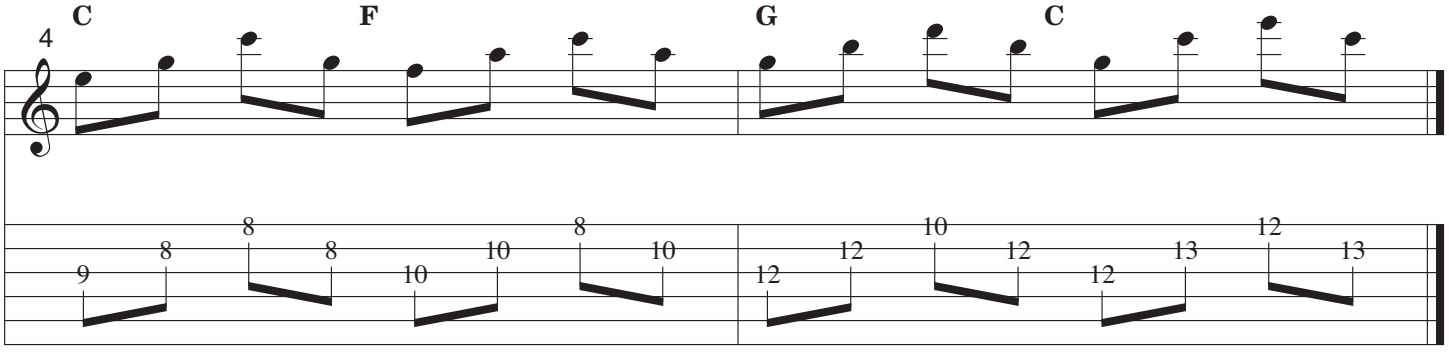
Crosspicking Pattern:



Exercise 1: I—IV—V Pattern in the Key of C

Audio CD
Tracks 10

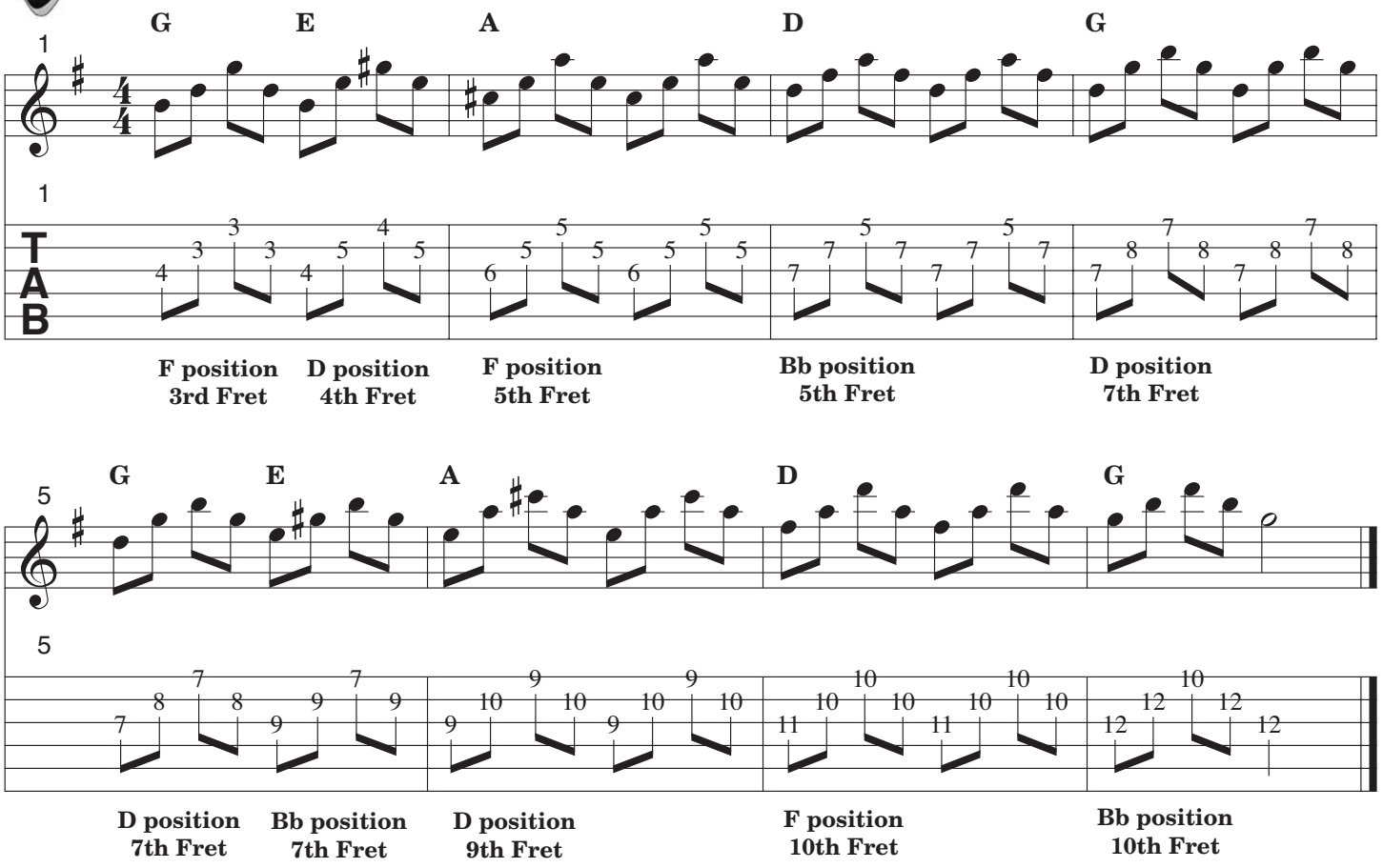




Audio CD
Track 11

Salty Dog Blues

Arranged by Dan Huckabee


G E A D G
F position 3rd Fret
D position 4th Fret
F position 5th Fret
Bb position 5th Fret
D position 7th Fret
G E A D G
D position 7th Fret
Bb position 7th Fret
D position 9th Fret
F position 10th Fret
Bb position 10th Fret

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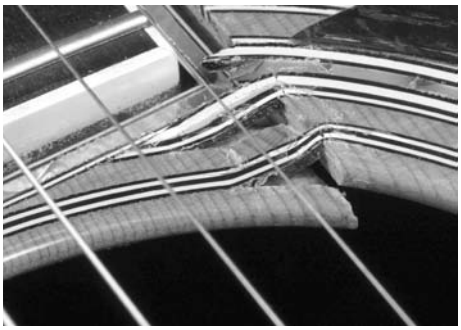
The Fingerboard Top Crack

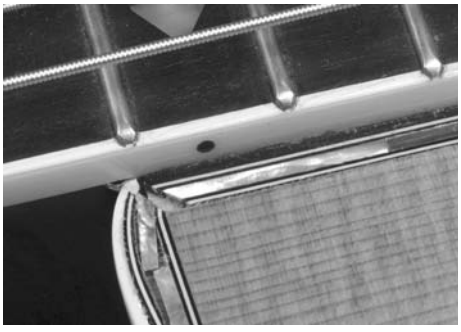
Yikes! take a look at this nasty image:



It's the soundhole of a recent vintage Martin D-45, and is it a mess! In the high heat of a parked car, the spruce top developed a lot of stress as it tried to shrink when the moisture was driven out of it. Then, with the increased heat, the braces under the top became loose as the glue softened and liquefied.

Both sides cracked, and the string tension was great enough to cause the entire neck block, neck and fingerboard assembly to slide forward into the soundhole.

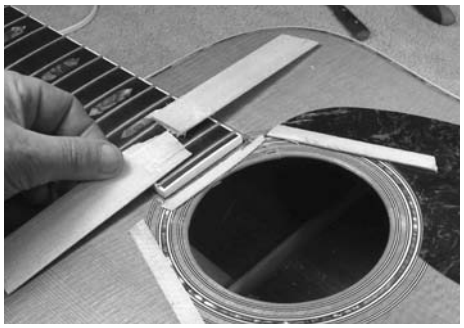
The potential for this kind of damage is one reason I'm a big advocate of the so-called "popsicle" brace, that flat brace under the soundhole. While this guitar had such a brace, the heat stress was just too much for the glue that held in originally. The D-45 has purfling and abalone inlay cut halfway through the top in this vulnerable area, so it's particularly vulnerable to cracking. My job was, of course, to straighten out this mess and reinforce the top against further movement or damage.



I started by reaching inside with a thin blade palette knife and further loosening the braces in the area.

Here you can see that my knife slipped easily under both the upper brace and the flat brace. The glue had really let go in the area:

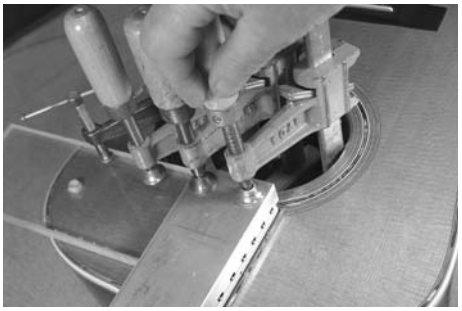
In all, I removed four pieces with the intent of strengthening the region by adding a bit more support. Also, I wanted to release all the support for the top so I could force it back into alignment.



The upper flat brace was originally cut in two to make room for the truss rod, but since it extended well under the fingerboard, it would ordinarily have provided plenty of support for the top.

Once all the local bracing was loosened or removed, the top flexed easily back into position, so I clamped it up on my workbench to achieve proper alignment of the top sections and neck angle.

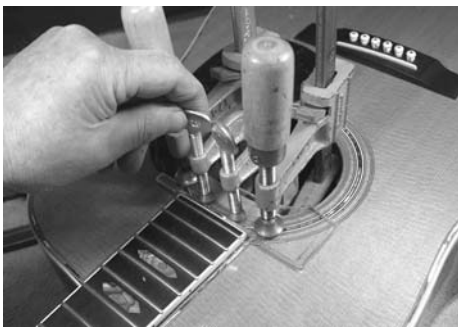
Once I had it rigidly clamped where I wanted it, I worked some glue into the cracks alongside the fingerboard, and clamped and reglued the remaining upper brace:



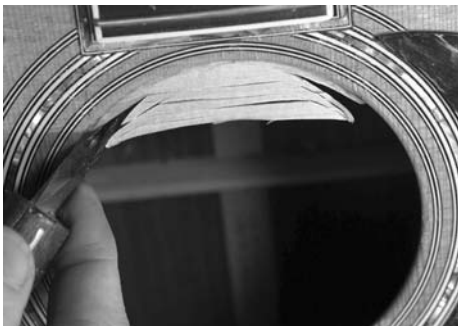
That would hold everything in position as I worked on reinforcing the area.

There was a bit of space between the upper brace and the soundhole, so I decided to add as much laminated spruce there as I could fit. I made up a flat spruce plate, and glued it in without trimming it around the hole.

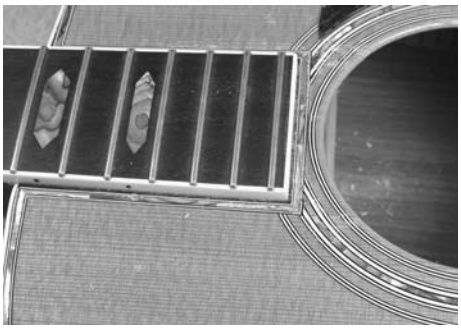
That way I'd be sure to get as wide a piece in there as possible, and have a nice big piece to work with as I clamped it up:



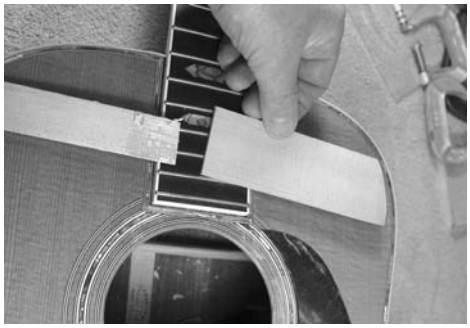
After the glue dried, I cut the piece out with my big knife, and beveled the edge to about forty-five degrees under the top so it wouldn't be noticed from the outside.



Progress so far—top aligned and patch trimmed:

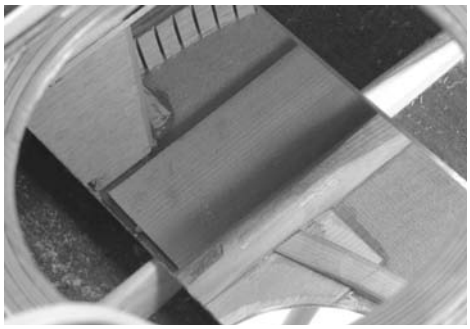


I really don't buy into the notion that the top is particularly sensitive or active in the area under the fingerboard and above the upper brace, so I make replacement flat braces as wide as possible. After all, I'm repairing an area that had already failed, and I wonder if the guitar is likely to get overheated again sometime. My replacement flat brace is considerably wider than the original:



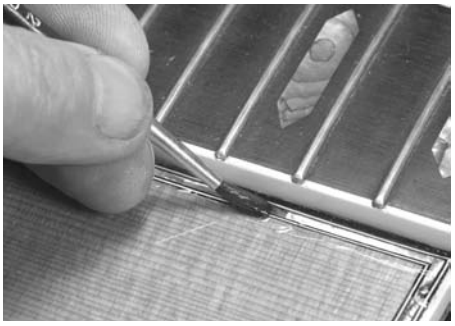
Once the flat brace sections were glued in place, I set about making new soundhole reinforcement braces. Because I'd added that section of spruce above the soundhole, I had to make my soundhole reinforcements a bit thicker so I could overlay my new spruce patch:

In this mirror image, you can see the whole deal—the wide flat brace, the big original upper brace, and my new pieces at the soundhole edge:

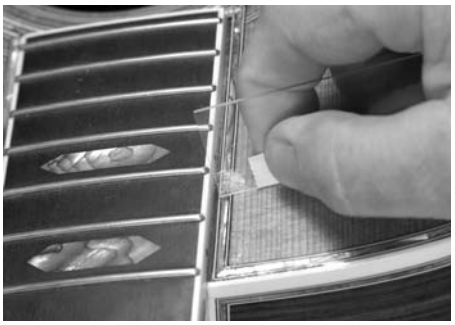


Outboard the damage was fairly minimal. The plastic purfling was just flexible enough to go right back into place, and only one piece of abalone had popped out. I made and inlaid a new abalone section:

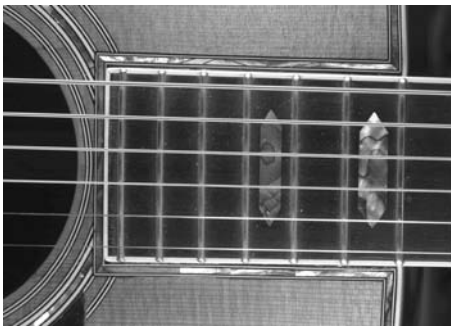
Then, some comparatively simple lacquer touch up to complete the job:



Letting the lacquer dry for about two weeks, I carefully scraped the new lacquer level using a glass microscope slide:



And, after final sanding and polishing, the job came out looking fine:



Kaufman's Corner

by Steve Kaufman

"Spinning Wheels" Part II

Welcome back to my corner of the magazine and to the "Old Spinning Wheels In The Parlor." I've played this song for a long time but it wasn't until I heard a 1928 or so version of Riley Puckett singing it that it came to full life. You have more than likely memorized last month's melody version of this song by now. If you haven't memorized it yet, go through this version but plan on really knuckling down and getting the basic melody licked before committing a lot of time to this version. You need to know what you are comparing measure by measure to fully understand how to manipulate runs, rolls and fills.

As in version one, you will hold some chord forms while you manipulate the rest of the left hand fingers to the melody notes. In the first measure, I am holding the two-finger C chord so I can play through the notes and keep the 4th and 2nd string notes ringing like the open 3rd string does. My little finger gets the 3rd fret 2nd string D note while my first and second fingers stay in place.

Measure 3: Try to hold the F note on the 4th string until you have to hit the 4th string open. The best tip on sustaining notes is to make them always sound like open strings and let them overlap onto the next note whenever possible.

Measure 6: Watch out for the eighth notes and the down-up pattern. I have marked the DU's with the arrows here as well as other danger zones.

Measure 15: Here is a set of "double stops". Use the fingers that are marked and see if you can figure out what is really happening melodically here. Ask me at a workshop if you don't see it.

Measure 23: I've substituted a nice chord change from the original version. I heard this once and it really stuck with me. If you can't get used to the sound of it or just plain don't like it you can use the same right-hand motion through the strings while holding a D or D7 chord.

Have fun with this treasure and let me know how it treats you.
Bye for now,
Steve Kaufman
www.flatpik.com
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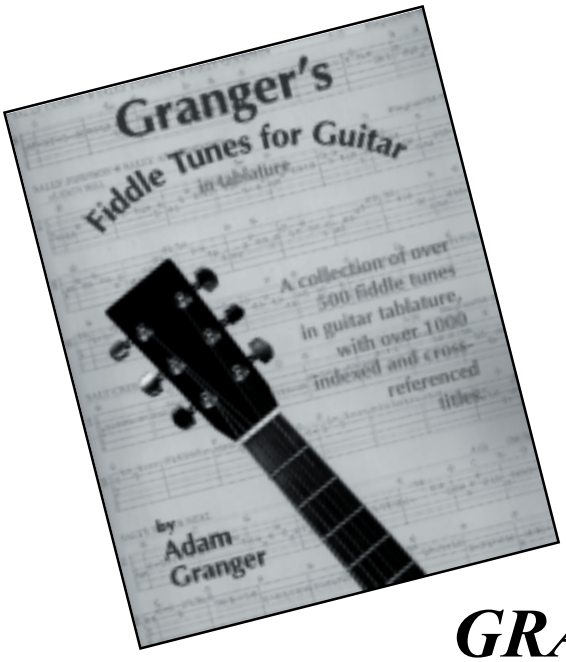
TEN REASONS WHY *YOU* NEED GRANGER'S FIDDLE TUNES FOR GUITAR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by
Adam Granger

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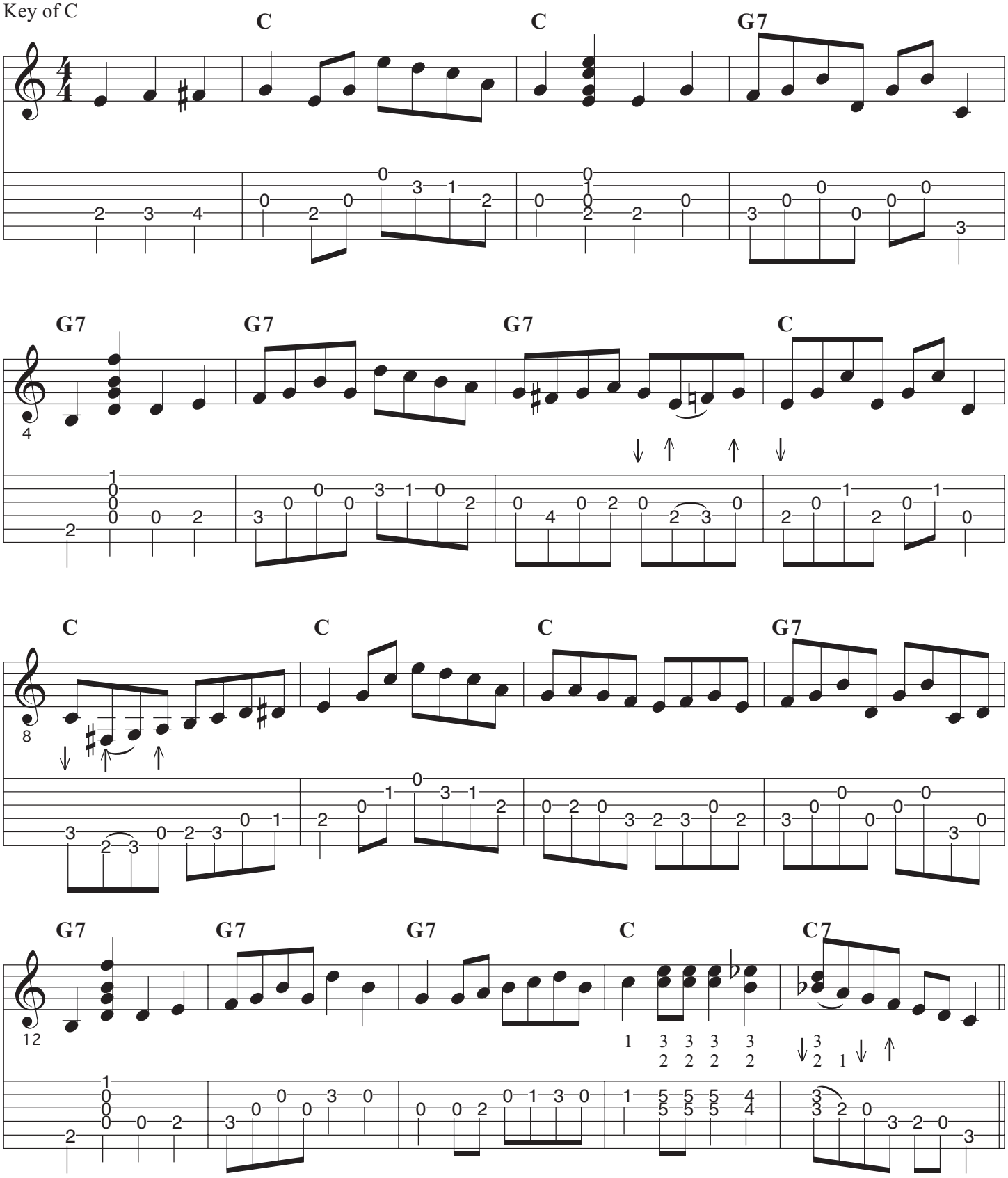
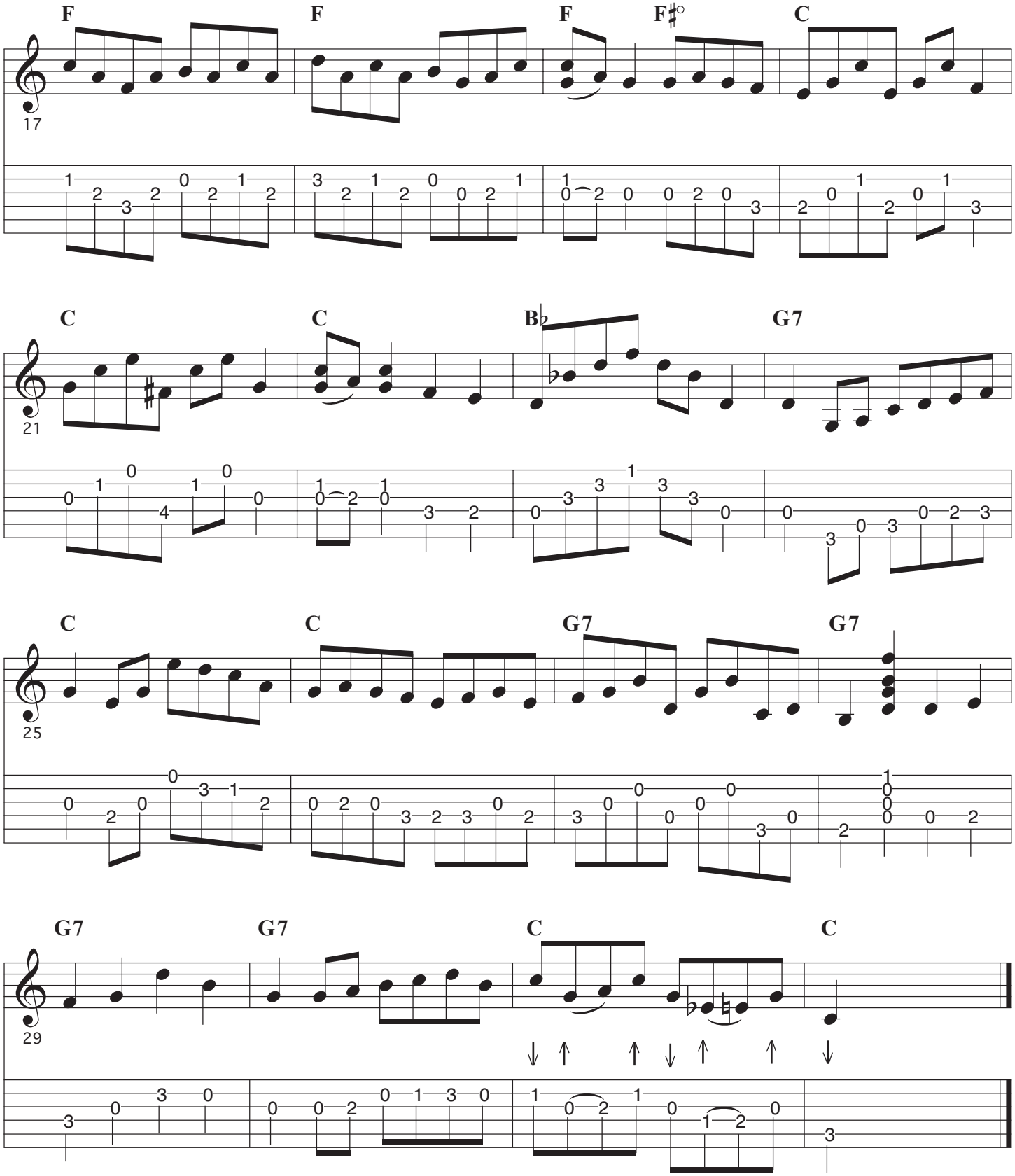
The Old Spinning Wheel in the Parlor

Version Two

Arranged by Steve Kaufman

Key of C



The Old Spinning Wheel in the Parlor (con't)

Taking It To The Next Level: Texas Swing Rhythm

by John Carlini

This will be an important exercise for those of you who are anxious to expand your chord and rhythm playing into the swing areas(s). It will help to get your playing up to "that next level."

First, please take a look at those chord blocks. It has been pointed out to me that there is some confusion about how to read these blocks, so here is a brief explanation.

- The top horizontal line represents the 1st string.
- The bottom horizontal line is the 6th string.
- The 6th string bass note fret is indicated for each chord.
- Each chord has only three notes.
- The notes are indicated on the string along with the finger to use for each note. It is very important to try and use the suggested fingering.
- The unused strings (5th, 2nd, and 1st) are dampened by using other parts of the fingers.

Now take a look at the musical examples (page 26). Here's a bit of music theory.

This is in the key of A major. You can tell that by the 3 sharps notated on the staff following the treble clef sign. That is called the "key signature." (Think of the key of A signing its name!) So the key of A has 3 sharps: F#, C#, and G#. Another possibility is that this piece of music could be in the key of F# minor, the relative minor to A major. The relative minor is always derived from the 6th step of the major scale, in this case, F# minor. One glance at the chord progression pretty much eliminates the minor possibility! So, we know we are in the key of A major.

The next thing you see is that letter C with a vertical line through the center. That tells us that the "time signature" is "cut time." That means the music is written in "four" but pulses in "two." The pulses are on the 1st and 3rd beats. Fast bluegrass and fiddle tune music is in cut time, allowing the melody to be written in 8th notes. In 4/4 (Common) time, bluegrass melodies would have to be notated in 16th notes. That would be unwieldy and difficult to read. Another way of thinking of cut time is that when 4/4 gets too fast to count comfortably, you simply cut it in half and count in 2! The pulses are indicated by rhythm slashes.

I am using a basic fiddle tune form. It's the progression you would play for, say, "Sally Good'n" or "Cumberland Gap."

Ex.1: This is open chord bluegrass style back-up.

Ex.2: Basic Texas Swing style.

The chord block #'s are indicated beneath the staff. Here is some guitar "nitty gritty" for getting from A to E and back. First, keep your left thumb behind the neck!

With chord #1 formed (A), release the tension, lift your index and middle fingers, but leave your pinky down. Slide your pinky up one fret to the 7th fret. Place your third and middle fingers on the 7th and 6th frets as indicated, apply tension. Reverse the process going back to A. When applying tension, press your fingers against your thumb, thus making a "vise" out of your hand. Get up to that next level!!

A word about string dampening: Apply tension to the chord, but play only one of the dampened strings. You should be able to feel that string vibrating against a lower part of your finger as you pick the string. Adjust your hand as necessary until all the unused strings produce clicks instead of notes. This is another reason why it is important to keep your thumb behind the neck.

You may be saying, "Wait a minute! That's an A6 chord, why is he calling it just an A chord? There's an F# in it!"
Right you are!

The deal is, in swing music, if you see a chord symbol comprised of just a letter, you have lots of leeway. How many ways can you play an A major chord? How many ways are there? They are all available. A6, AMaj7, A 6/9, hundreds of 'em! Thousands! Which ones are appropriate? Which ones sound best? Well, this is as good a place as any to start. Would AMaj7 sound good on "Sally Good'n"? No way. It's too "pretty," As you develop your chord vocabulary, so you also develop your sense of musical taste and style. These 3-note chord forms work great for Texas Swing style!

Ex.3: Texas Swing Variation #1.

Now we're going to wake up this chord progression by putting it into motion! Chord #3 is also an A major chord but this time the root (A) is hidden in the middle of the chord (4th string). The bottom note is C#, the 3rd of the chord. So it is called A over C# and notated A/C#. We can hook those A chords together by using a passing E7 chord. As you play the first 2 bars you'll see that it works in both directions. Then in bar 3 we just use both A chords in sequence and finish with a V to I cadence (ending).

More nitty-gritty: throughout this exercise lead with your pinky. Just pick up your index and middle fingers and apply a squeeze-release energy to each chord.

Texas Swing Variation #2

Finally, we're going to add some chromaticism to this progression. Diminished chords function mainly as linkage chords. They link chords together and keep things moving. Notice in the chord blocks that Chord #2 is also labeled Bdim. As I've mentioned before, these 3 note chords can be called 2 or 3 or 4 different names, depending on their usage. So that could be an E7 even though there is no E in the chord(!). The root, E, is really on the 5th string, but the chord is functioning as an E7 chord. It also could function as a B diminished chord with B as the root. If you play a B diminished chord on the top 4 strings, then play chord #2, you will hear it as a B diminished. If you move chord #2 up

one fret, obviously you have an F7 or Cdim chord. That's what we're doing in bars 2 and 3 of this exercise.

Again, let your pinky do the leading, and apply tension- release.

TEXAS SWING (finally!)

To achieve that Texas Swing sound, you have to become two players(!), guitar and bass. Play the 6th string bass note on beats 1 and 3, and strum the other two notes with a kind of punchy sound on beats 2 and 4. And there you have it!

I'd like to thank my friend Peter Becker, mandolinist, world-class fretted instrument technician, and Apple computer expert, for being my special guest on the CD this time around.

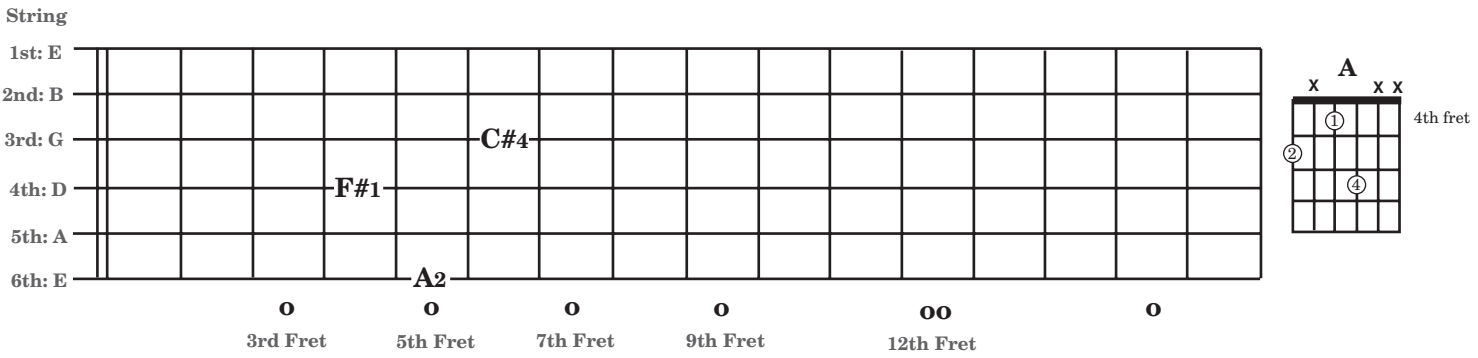
Finally, for those of you who were able to attend Steve Kaufman's '05 Camp, I had a great time working with you and meeting you all. Thanks for your encouraging words and thanks to Steve and Donna for a first-class experience!

Till next time, enjoy the time you spend playing music. Get up to that next level!

Please visit John's web site (www.johncarlini.com) to sign up for the latest performance and teaching info and acoustic music news. Check out the CD by the John Carlini Quartet, "The Game's Afoot!", featuring Don Stiernberg, Brian Glassman, and Steve Holloway, w/special guest, Pat Cloud at www.fgmrecords.com. John and mandolinist, Don Stiernberg, also record for Blue Night Records. Please visit www.bluenightrecords.com for more info. For technical and repair info, Peter Becker can be contacted at pbecker245@mac.com.

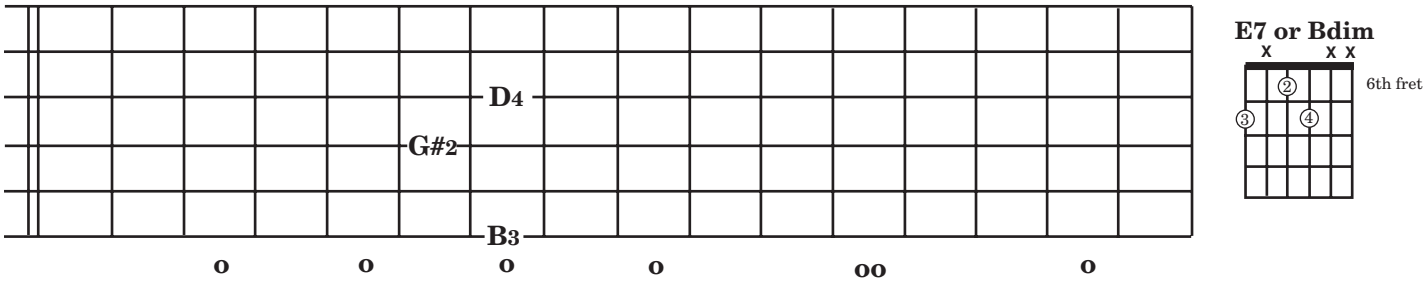
Texas Swing Chords

Number 1: A Chord

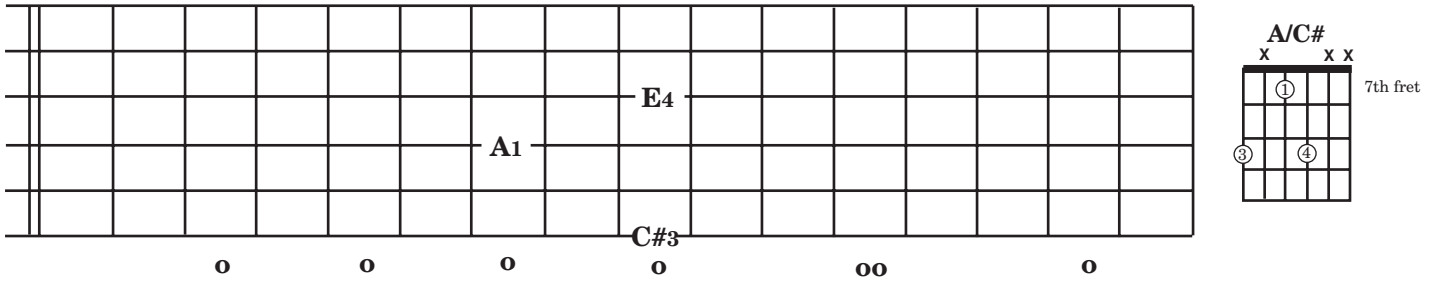


(Large Letter = Note Small Number = Finger)

Number 2: E7 or Bdim



Number 3: A/C#



Audio CD
Tracks 16 - 19

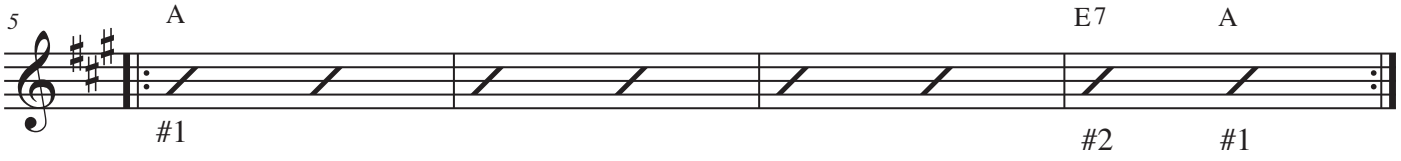
Sally Goodin'— Rhythm

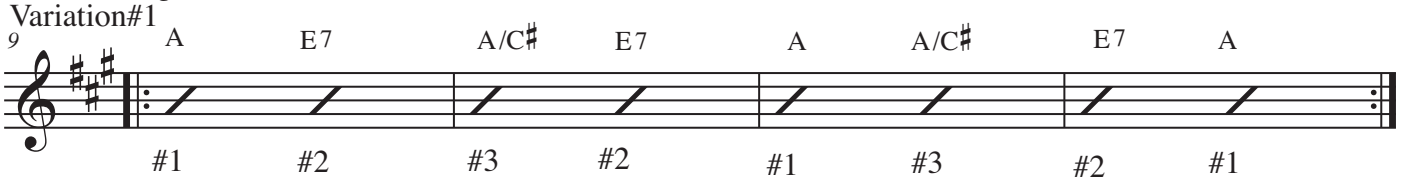
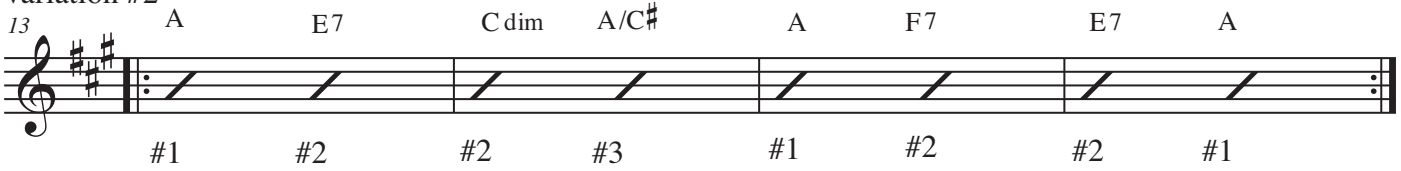
Arranged by John Carlini

Ex. 1
Bluegrass

Open Chords

Ex. 2
Basic Texas Swing



Ex.3
Texas Swing
Variation#1

Ex.4
Texas Swing
Variation #2

Chris Jones

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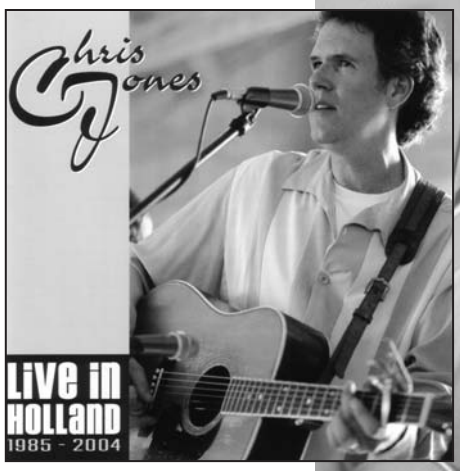

Live in Holland

Join Chris for a special 1-day workshop in Winfield, KS, Wednesday, September 14, from 10 to 4, right before the Walnut Valley Festival. To register, call 620-221-3250.

Guitar Builder: Jerry Shadrick & JDS Guitars

by Dan Miller

John Chapman and Jerry Shadrick

Although an old Martin guitar is "the" guitar to have for most bluegrass performers, more and more the prices of these instruments makes them unaffordable to all but affluent collectors. Even when a performer can afford an old Martin, taking it out on the road is not always an option, due to their value and/or vulnerability to getting damaged, lost, or stolen. Thus most of the players who travel frequently search to find a new guitar that they can work with that will still give them something that is close to that old Martin sound. John Chapman, of the Chapmans, has found the guitar that he thinks fills his needs in those being built by Jerry Shadrick of JDS Guitars in Montreal, Missouri. John's confidence in Jerry's building abilities has led to the two collaborating in the design and production of the John Chapman signature model JDS guitar.

John said, "Jerry's guitar is the closest thing to my old guitar than any other new guitar that I have played. I have a 1940 Martin D-18. When I came to Jerry I wanted to see if he could make a rosewood guitar that would sound and feel like my D-18, yet also have the low-end characteristics of rosewood. After working with the bracing patterns, and other things, he got it to sound the way I want it. We also worked on the set-up and feel, and so now it has the same punch and feel as my Martin, but with more low-end." As a result of their collaboration, the JDS John Chapman signature model is now in production.

Like many builders, Jerry Shadrick started his career by repairing guitars. Although he had been playing guitars and bluegrass music, and "hot-rodding" guitars since he was a young boy, he didn't start repairing instruments professionally until 1982. He said, "As a kid I couldn't afford a Martin guitar, so I started tinkering with my guitar. We always tried to hot-rod our cheaper guitars."

When asked about the things he did to "hot-rod" the guitars, Jerry said, "Finish and bracing is where it is all at. Number one was stripping the finish off of the overseas guitars, getting rid of the polyurethane finish that they use and going back with a nitrocellulose lacquer. The next thing was to scallop the braces. I've worked on trying to

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get a different sound out of braces for a long time. If you've got a solid top to deal with, you can about take a shoebox and make it sound acceptable. It is all in the way you scallop those braces. Where the braces are placed makes a difference as well, but on a guitar that you're hot-rodding you have no choice about the placement."

By trial and error, and talking with other repair people and builders, Jerry began to understand how to successfully scallop the braces on a guitar to create a more desirable sound. He says, "I'll tell you, there is a big call for that out in the repair world. When I was a kid of thirteen or fourteen years old taking a Japanese guitar and hot-rodding it to get a better sound was something else. I really got into it."

Having started out as a young teenager tinkering with guitars and guitar construction, Jerry jumped at the chance to work with a violin builder near his hometown. He said, "When I was about nineteen my mom bought some violins at a yard sale and I thought I could work on those, you know, do some finish work. My whole family plays bluegrass music and my uncle and grandpa are fiddlers. They knew this violin builder and so I started bugging this guy. He was a master violin builder in Davenport, Iowa. I told him I had this fiddle that I wanted to repair and he basically showed me how. He gave me a lot of pointers on violin repair and gave me the ins and outs about it. I can't really say that I sat and studied under him. I just pestered him about it and asked him questions."

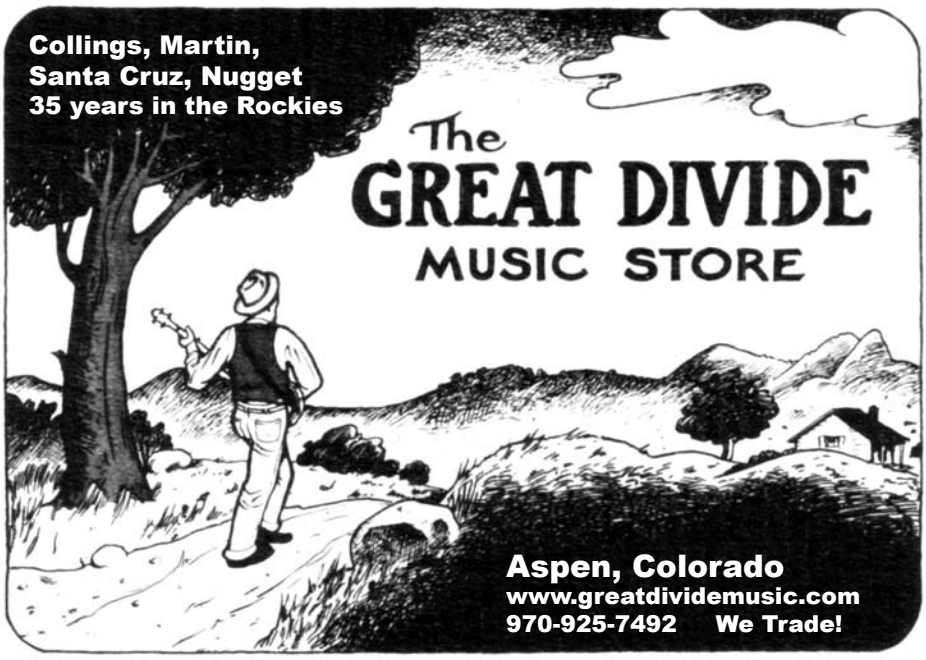
Regarding his move from repairing instruments to building, Jerry said, "That came about by sheer accident about five years ago. I had thought that I always wanted to build a guitar, you know, have one out there. So I made the first one and a guy in Texas bought it from me. So I started building more, and more people wanted to buy them. There are several people around here in the Ozarks that are playing my guitars. Then I got hooked up with John Chapman and we started working on this signature series. It has just gone from there." Until two years ago Jerry had always kept the instrument repair and building business as a sideline to his military service and work as a police officer. As business picked up he decided to turn it into his full time occupation in 2003. His shop is next to his home in Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri.

After spending many years repairing and hot-rodding guitars, when he finally decided to build one from scratch Jerry had a good idea about what he wanted. He said, "In building, like hot-rodding, I would say the biggest factors are top brace placement, brace scalloping, and finish." Although the specific bracing pattern and scallop will depend on the tone woods that are used for the guitar, Jerry said, "What I do is try to brace and scallop each guitar to that unique piece of top wood. My bracing pattern and scalloping is based on the type of wood, the grain spacing, grain pattern, and grain cantor. I find that Sitka is very consistent and I can usually brace all Sitka tops pretty much the same. However, the red spruce is different. If you use a standard scallop on some red spruce you can get a really 'wholfy' sound. Guys that play a lot of lead don't like that. It is too hard to mic an instrument like that. John Chapman and I have been working over a year on his signature model. We are currently on the third prototype. We are continually changing things here and there. We are now working with the soundhole size. I'm finding that a slightly larger-than-standard soundhole helps bring out the mid-range."

When asked about nuts, saddles, and bridge pins, Jerry said, "Actually I've been working with some camel bone bridge pins. We are playing around with that. John prefers the fossilize ivory or the bone. The buffalo horn pins also produce a good tone. We haven't decided yet what will be the standard on the John Chapman model, but I'm going to say that it will probably be the camel bone. That is the way I'm leaning as far as the pins. For the nut and saddle I like the cow bone with the vintage look (non bleached)." Regarding the bridge itself Jerry says that they are looking at putting a bridge on the Chapman model that is a little narrower than standard, front to back. He says that he has found this style bridge brightens up the sound and makes the guitar a little louder. He uses a through saddle, includes the transverse ("popsicle") brace, and uses rock maple for the bridgeplate. Jerry likes wood binding and uses ebony, curly maple, or koa. He says, "I'll bind with plastic if somebody wants it. But I think there is a tonal difference with wood binding and I also think it looks better."

As stated earlier, Jerry feels like the type of finish used on the guitar plays a big role in the tone production. On his guitars he uses nitrocellulose lacquer. He says, "If you look some of Todd Sams' guitars, you'll see some grain in his guitars, and you'll see some grain in mine. We both use a thin finish. I know a production line style guitar has to have a lot of finish to hang in the music store, but I cut that back. Some guitars I put filler on and some I don't. I'll get my finished leveled, but then I try to get as much finish off of there as possible. I like it to just be covered. I don't like a lot of grain, but if a little bit is there, it doesn't bother me. My guitars are buffed out and glossed up, but it doesn't have to be like glass."

When asked about the quality that a thin coat of lacquer adds to a guitar versus putting a thicker coat on, Jerry said, "It opens up the volume. It makes a new guitar not sound so tight. As the guitar ages I think there is a sweetness that will come from that. There is just a real nice tone value



when you thin that lacquer down. In my opinion, everything that you put on that guitar is going to affect the volume or the tone, or both. My experience in refinishing the cheaper guitars is that when you get the crud out of the wood they open up and sound beautiful. I'll tell you what I did once. There is a guy at a music store near where I live. He had a guitar that looked like it was dipped in polyurethane and pulled back out. I wanted to sell him on this hot-rodding idea so I bought the guitar and sanded all of the polyurethane off. I got all the finish off the guitar and the filler out of the wood. Then I scalloped the braces. I refinished it and took it back to the music store and asked the owner to play it next to another new one that he had hanging there. He couldn't believe the difference."

Although Jerry's John Chapman model guitar is a work in progress, he also said, "I'm already taking orders and I've got one that I'm getting ready to ship out very soon. However, knowing John as I do, I think it is something that will continue to evolve over the years. He is going to hear something that he wants changed. And it will be for the better because he has a great ear. He is a phenomenal guitarist and I trust his knowledge. I'll build it the way he wants it and combine that with my own ideas. John and I are working together."

The basic John Chapman model is Honduran rosewood with a red spruce top. The binding is curly maple and the purfling is black-white-black. There is a through saddle, ebony bridge, camel bone bridge pins, custom made herringbone endblock inlay, abalone/fine herringbone/abalone rosette, and abalone logo on headstock. The headstock overlay is Brazilian rosewood. The neck inlay consists of abalone dots and John Chapman's signature in mother-of-pearl at the twelfth fret. The fingerboard is ebony, the neck mahogany, the nut and saddle are vintage cow bone. The tuners are Waverly with vintage butter bean knobs. The truss rod on all of Jerry's guitars is the dual-action Hot Rod. All braces are red spruce.

The neck on the prototype Chapman model that Jerry brought to the interview was attached with a dovetail design that was bolted-on. He said, "I bolt them on because I think that if the guitar every needs a neck reset, it is a lot cheaper. I see no difference in the sound. But I can do whatever the customer wants. John's standard model will be a traditional dovetail."

In March, just prior to the interview I conducted with Jerry, the Chapmans toured two weeks in Canada and John played the prototype that I was able to inspect and play during the interview. Jerry said, "John told me that the audience response was about half and half between my guitar and his old Martin. Some liked the Martin better, but some liked my guitar better than the Martin. And this guitar is still new and tight, so that feedback made me feel like was are on track."

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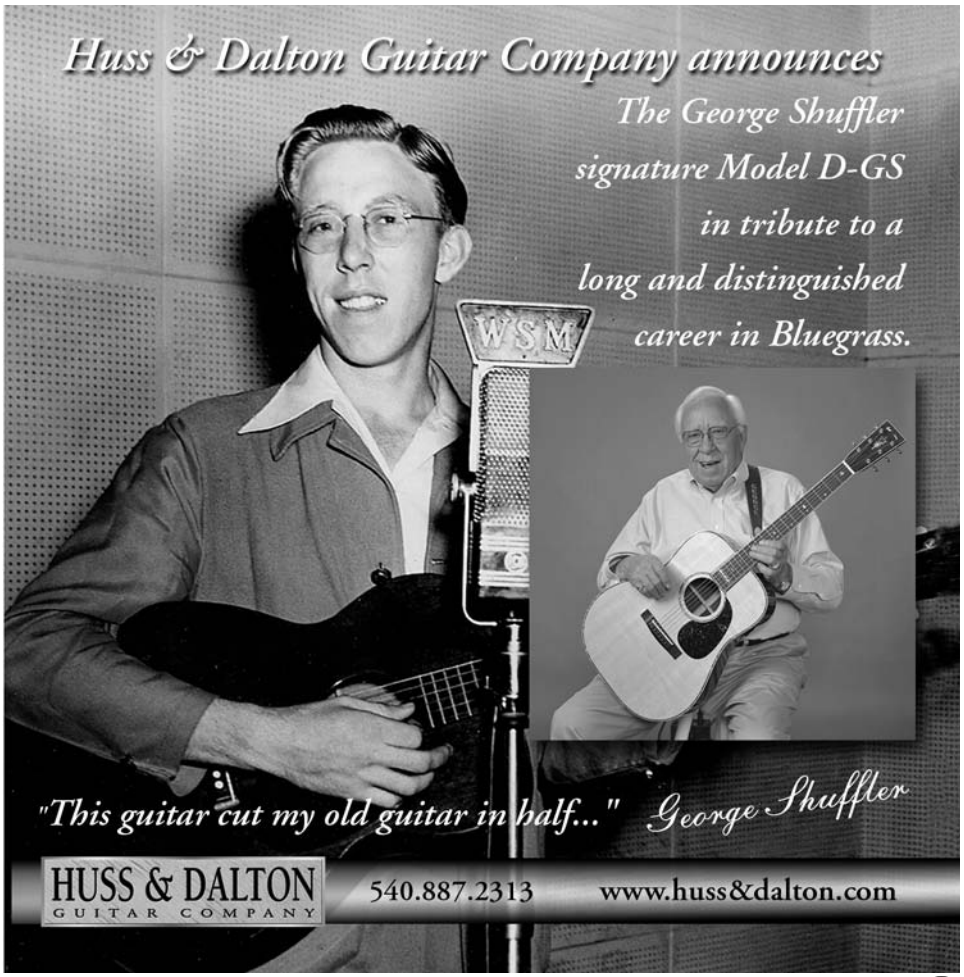
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NASHVILLE FLATTOP

By Brad Davis

A while back Dan Miller asked if I would be interested in writing a song for a benefit record that would help raise money for a little girl named Sophie. Sophie is Steve McCreary's daughter and Steve is a friend who works at the Collings Guitar Company. It wasn't hard to say "yes." I picked a day and sat down to write, but I suddenly realized that I didn't know much about Sophie. I was able to get a little info about her on a web site, and that was all I needed to get started.

"Sophie" was written about a ship that was faster and tougher than any ship in the fleet. This ship named Sophie overcame terrible odds in the roughest waters during a time when pirates were a daily threat. Sophie was the king's favorite because of her many victories. She also made the king very wealthy with the gold that she transported back from foreign lands. So, detune your low "E" to a "D" note, capo to the second fret and play in the key of "E" in the D-chord position. This solo stays very close to the melody and floats like a sail in the wind. There is a good amount of space and dynamics. Pay attention to this when you create your own solos in the future.

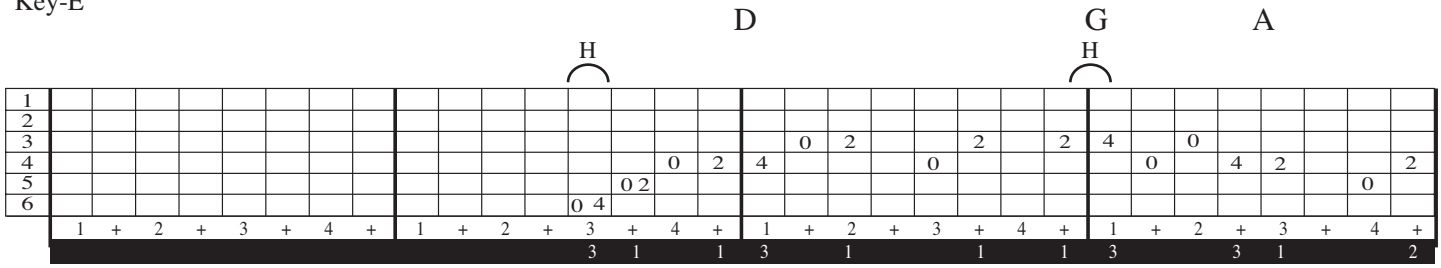
After the CD came out a reader called in to the FGM office to request that we provide a transcription to my guitar solo on this tune, and I'm happy to do it. Please pick up a copy of this CD *Songs for Sophie* if you don't have one. You can hear my full version of the song and a lot of other great music from many talented artist, all of who play Collings instruments. Let's all lend Sophie a hand shall we? Have fun with this and good luck.

Audio CD
Tracks 22

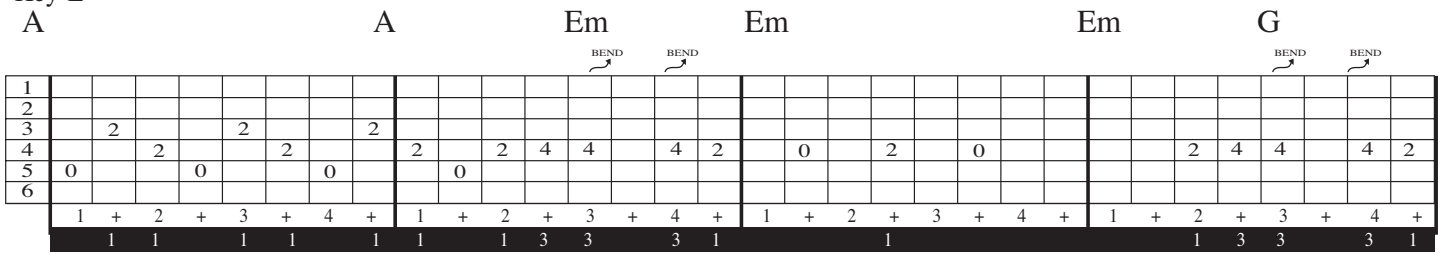
SOPHIE

brad davis bdm Publishing BMI

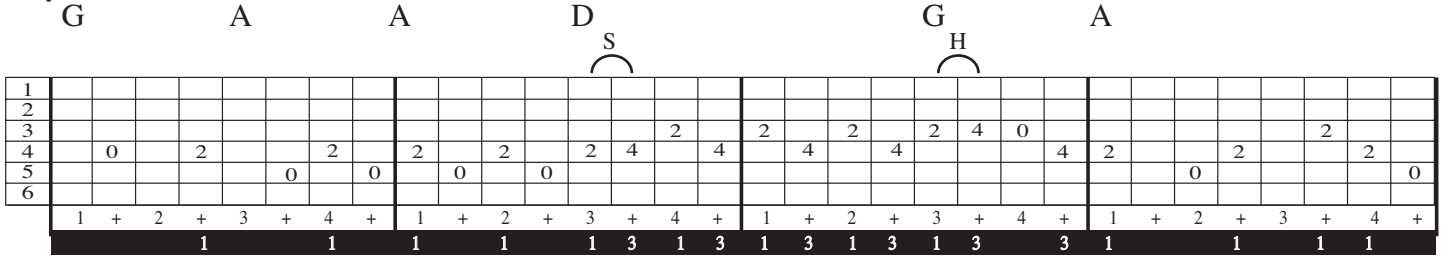
Key-E



Key-E



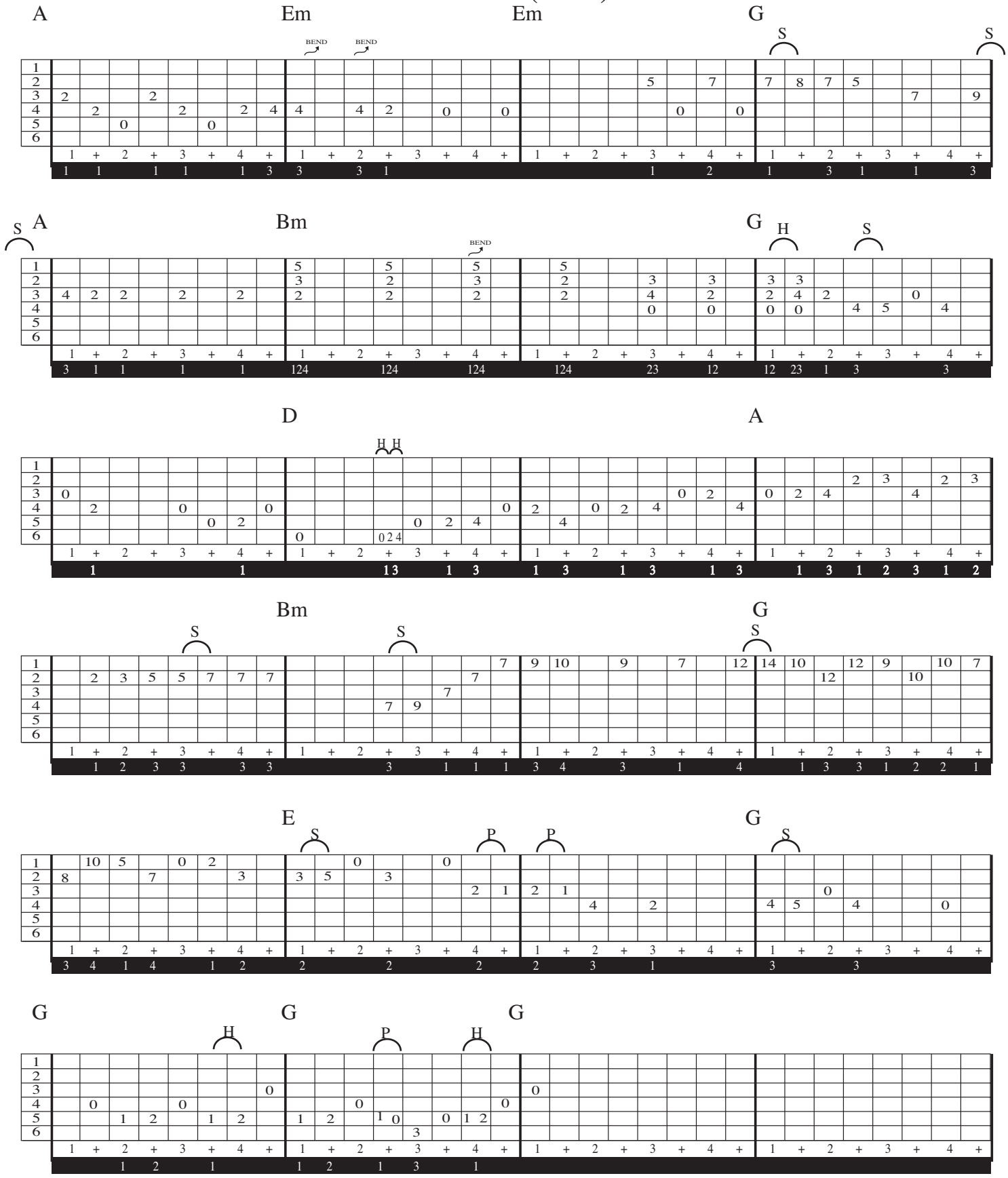
Key-E



Key-E

SOPHIE (con't)

brad davis bdm Publishing BMI



Break Time

by Chris Jones

Way back when the first issue of *FGM* came out (it was longer ago than you think), I began this column with a discussion of melody as the basis for guitar breaks, and I'd like to revisit the subject.

When I worked with Dan Huckabee on my first instructional audio course (fasten your seat belt: shameless plug ahead!), *Designing Guitar solos for Bluegrass Songs*, Dan liked the idea of classifying and naming licks that are used to add to the main melody notes of the song. We called licks that led up to a melody note "intro" licks, and licks that happened in between melody notes "connector" licks, and licks that happened at the end of a note or phrase, "trail-off" licks". Other licks that didn't fall into these categories were discarded, cut up, and eventually recycled. (I'm kidding about the last part; actually, licks that didn't fall into those categories exactly were just called "embellishments.")

These names were helpful in understanding what was being added to the basic melody to turn it into a full-blown guitar break and how to then use these licks to glue together melody notes of a completely different song.

It may seem overly systematic at first glance, but it's really meant as a tool to more effectively use ear-training and improvisation. The idea is not to rely on a stock set of licks in different breaks, but just to become comfortable with different ways to embellish the melody of a song, thereby making your breaks sound unique, but melody-driven at the same time.

For many who find it hard to extract the basic melody and find it on the guitar, I recommend simply humming the song and finding the notes on your guitar. (Note: if your humming is too far out-of-tune, you may actually find the wrong melody notes on the guitar. This may require the temporary services of someone who can hum for you. Check the yellow pages under "hummers.") Once you've done this, practice that basic melody for a while, then you can proceed with embellishing this melody and turning it into your finished break.

I've gone through this process for you (I did the humming so you didn't have to) and tabbed out the very basic melody of the bluegrass chestnut, "Little Cabin Home on the Hill." The more advanced among you might get to about the third measure of this, roll your eyes and say "Oh come on, Jones!" It is very basic, but bear with me. It doesn't hurt to get familiar with what will later be the melodic core of your break. In truth, even I got bored, so I stuck one small trail-off lick in with the melody. If you can find it, you get extra credit.

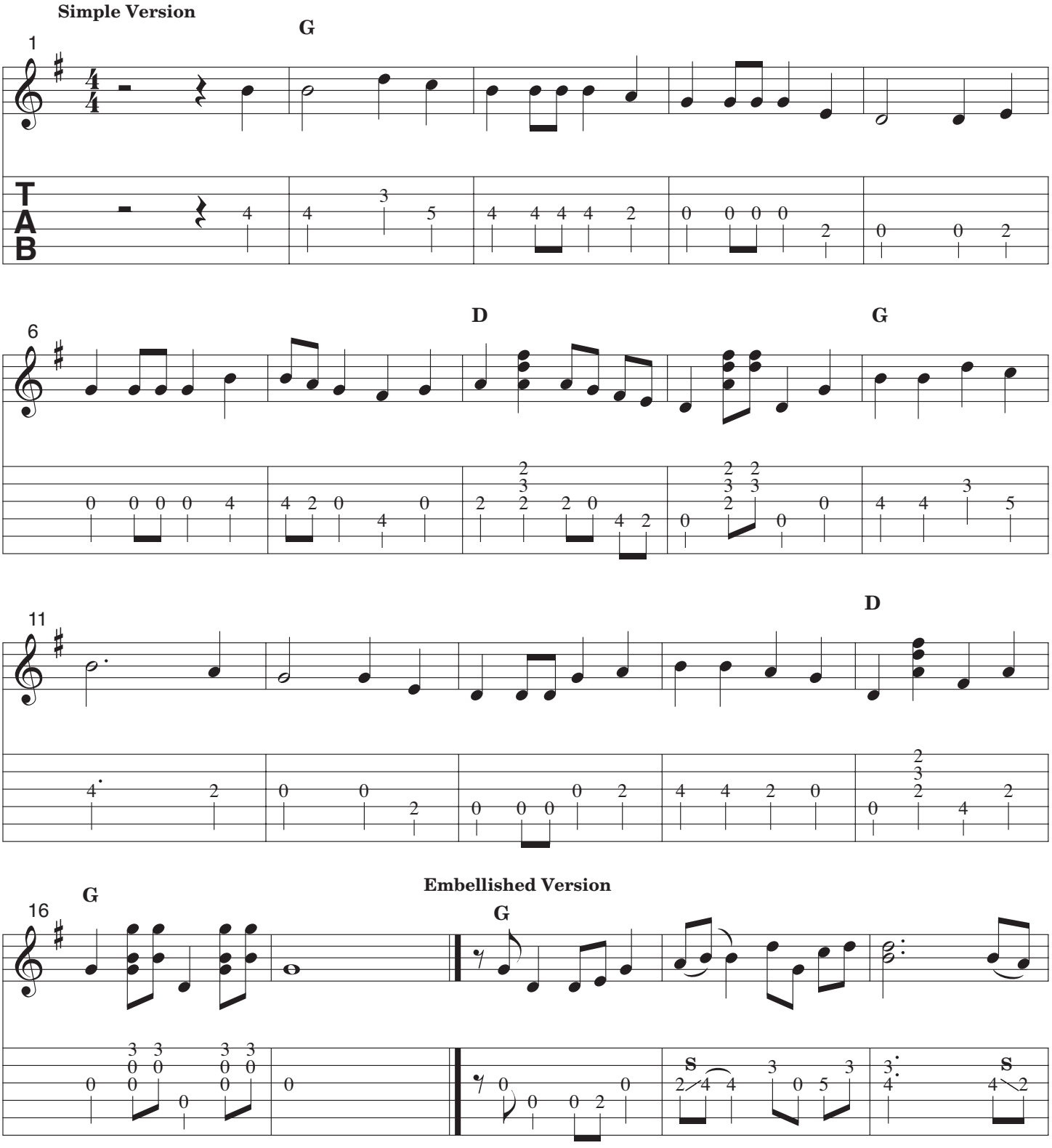
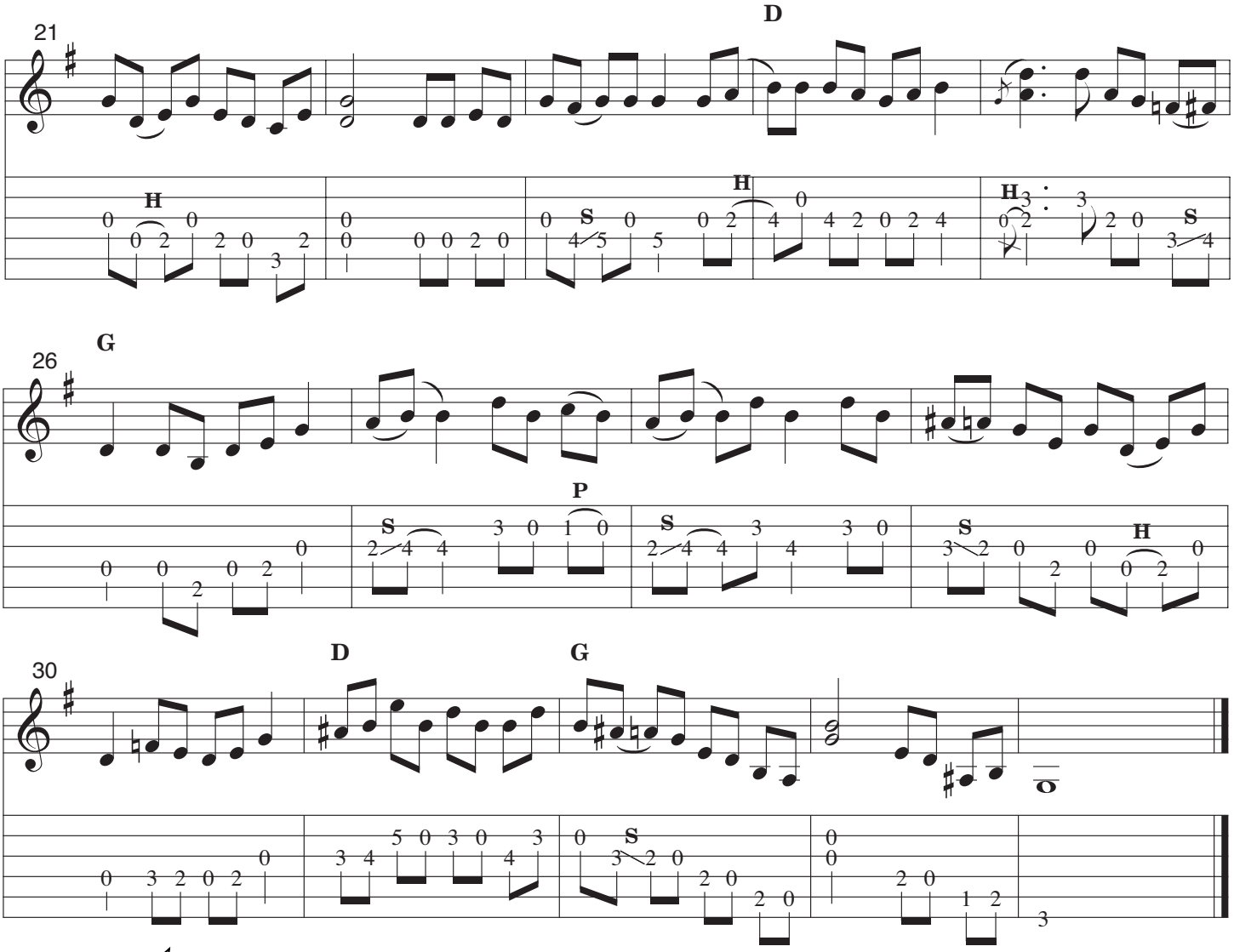
Next I have an embellished break for the same song. With the possible exception of the semi-hot lick at the end, the basic melody is all still there; it has simply been added to, connected to, trailed-off from, etc. The break has parts that are complex and, in places, syncopated, but it is still very much "Little Cabin Home on the Hill."

To give you some examples of the lick classifications mentioned above, the embellished break begins with a classic intro lick leading up to the first melody note, then the melody is enhanced by some extra notes and a double-stop in the next two measures. Then measure 4 makes use of a connector lick to tie some of the melody notes together. Measure 8 provides a good example of a trail-off lick.

Once you've learned and practiced both versions, try doing the same thing on your own with a different song, like "Your Love is Like a Flower," "Pig in a Pen,", "Don't Cry For Me Argentina," or any song you know the melody to. You may want to start by just changing some of my break around. For example, try trading around the intro licks in measure 1 and measure 9. Or, If you're finding the embellished break to be too complex, try just adding some of the licks in it to the simple version and playing that. That, of course, would be after you've hired your hummer.

Audio CD
Tracks 24 - 26

Little Cabin Home on the Hill

Arranged by Chris Jones

Little Cabin Home on the Hill (con't)

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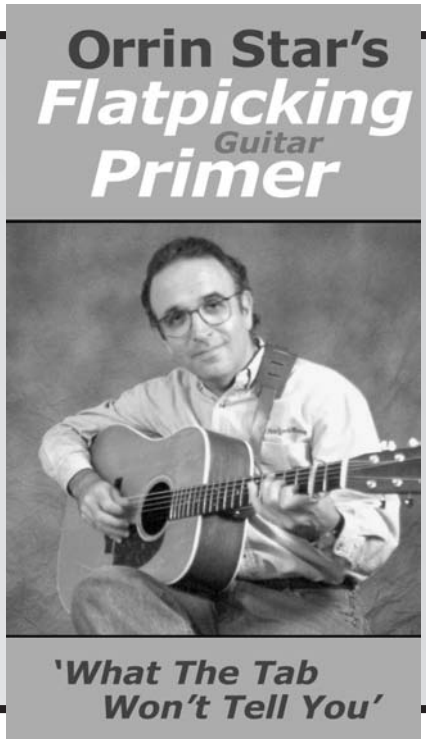

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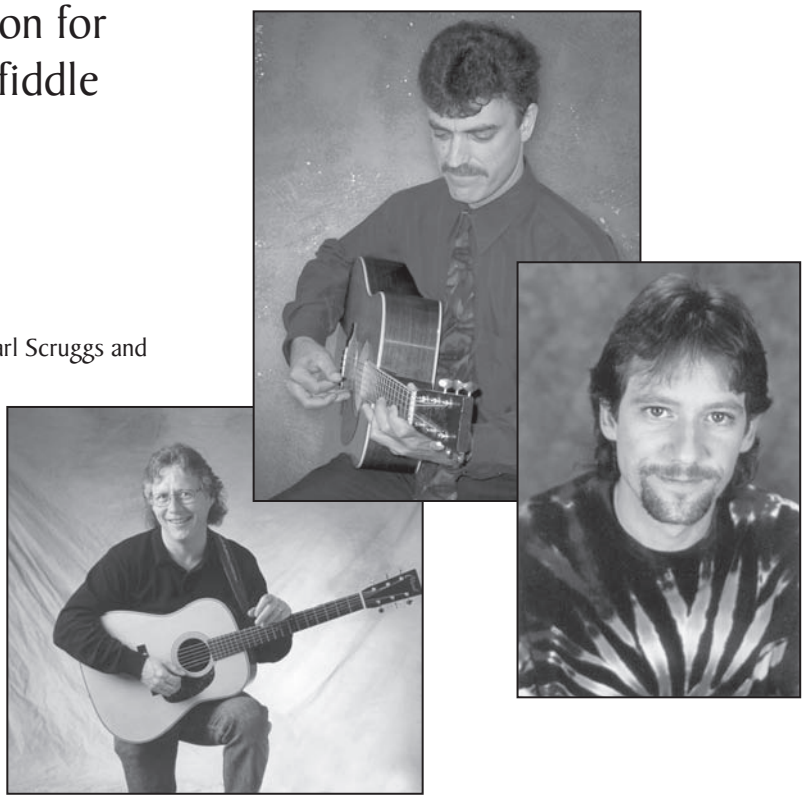

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Flatpick Profile: Maro Kawabata

by Larry Robinson

Bill Monroe, the "Father of Bluegrass Music" stated, "I'm a farmer with a mandolin and a high tenor voice." Monroe sowed his "musical seeds" throughout the world during his career, and one of those seeds sprouted in the mind of a young Japanese boy in Kyoto, Japan in 1974: Maro Kawabata saw Bill Monroe on television and the twelve year old was hooked!

American country music was pretty well integrated into the Japanese culture in the 1970s and they were producing some fairly good musical instruments. Maro received his first guitar when he was twelve years old. He doesn't recall the brand, but it cost less than one hundred dollars.

Armed with his new guitar and a chord chart, young Maro started on a venture that changed his life. Now he would explore the sounds that came out of that "gourd shaped box" that captivated him a few years earlier. Kawabata practiced every day, "wishing for more fingers on his left hand."

Maro's first "good" guitar was a Tokai "Cat's Eye" guitar. The guitar was fashioned after an older Martin guitar that had a "cat's eye" inlay at the 12th. fret. That was a birthday gift from his father for his fourteenth birthday. By the time he turned sixteen Maro had his first Martin D-28 guitar, and he says that, "I've had very little sleep since that time!"

Kawabata has never tried to copy any particular artist, but he credits several with being influential in his playing. "Clarence White for his dynamic rhythm, as well as his delicate but novel lead picking." Tony Rice for his "excellent artistic approach, and his tone." He also names Albert Lee, Charles Sawtelle and Russ Barenberg, but he states, "The list is endless when it comes to influences."

Maro came to the United States when he was eighteen to attend college at Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, Missouri. Along with the standard college curriculum he had to deal with, Maro found that the music that he was playing in Japan was quite different from what he was hearing when he jammed with the bluegrass pickers on campus. He started to question his understanding of the music. He credits those campus jams with helping him to develop his playing ability and appreciation of the music that he loves.

After college Maro returned to Japan where he met, and married, his American wife Sandra. They returned to the United States to raise their family and he has been a valued member of the musical communities in several states since that time. At this time he lives in South Elgin, Illinois.

Maro owns three guitars at the present time. He has a 1948 Martin D-28 that was previously owned by one of Kawabata's favorite guitar players, Brian Stephenson of Monroe, Georgia. He also has a custom made instrument crafted by Elichi Sumi in Japan. It's a Brazilian rosewood dreadnaught guitar fashioned after a 1930s vintage Martin D-28 with a slightly wider neck.

A couple of years ago he ventured on to e-Bay and won the bid on a 1952 Martin D-18. Maro states, "It was a well balanced guitar with that good old D-18 sound!" He does not currently own this guitar anymore. However, he did recently buy a Santa Cruz D-WP model that he gave to his son Daniel as a birthday present.

Kawabata's practice routine doesn't follow any particular pattern. However, he says that he is very conscious of his rhythm playing so he concentrates on his right hand techniques. He feels that rhythm is the foundation for any good guitarist. His picks are triangular, 1.5mm in thickness. He uses Elixir medium gauge strings on his guitars.

Maro Kawabata can also be heard doing some vocals on his recordings. His *Carolina Blue* CD came out for a few years on the Copper Creek label. His fans are looking forward to a new CD—*Rippling Water*—that he has in the works on his own New Riverside label. That CD will be available soon. A tab of Maro's composition "Dan River" from that project accompanies this article.

Kawabata is also putting together a band that draws upon some talented musicians. The future looks bright for Maro, and for fans of great music.

Editor's Note:

Larry Robinson, a radio DJ from the Chicago area, approached me some time last year about featuring Maro Kawabata in *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. Shortly after I expressed some interest, Maro sent me a copy of his yet-to-be-released CD. I liked what I heard and prior to a trip to Chicago in May of this year I called Maro and asked if we could get together while I was in town. While I was in Chicago, Maro took me out and treated me to some great Japanese food. We had a chance to talk about his career in bluegrass music. After I receive the article from Larry, I decided that it would be nice to add a little bit more information to it regarding Maro's bluegrass journey.

While bluegrass music is big in Japan, it is sometimes hard for a Japanese artist to be accepted here in the United States. Let's face it; sometimes it is even hard for someone who lives outside of the southern Appalachian region of the country to be accepted. I remember back when we first started this magazine I was living in California. I would get calls from people in the Southeastern part of the country who

would say, "You aren't just going to talk about that California bluegrass are you?" Once I assured them that I was born and raised in Virginia, they seemed to feel more comfortable with the material the magazine would be including. I relate that story just to say that for someone who is from another country and playing bluegrass music in the United States acceptance can be an uphill battle.

I think that one of the things that has helped Maro achieve the level of acceptance that he enjoys is that many of the well-respected bluegrass musicians in the US have accepted him. That's evidenced by Copper Creek Records, of Roanoke, Virginia, releasing his first solo CD, *Carolina Blue*. Joining Maro on that recording were Sammy Shelor, Ron Stewart, Missy Raines, Jim Hurst, Keith Little, Bobby Hicks, and Butch Baldessari. Quite an impressive line up!

Maro said that he first met Keith Little through an introduction that was made by a friend of his in Japan, banjo player Kaz Inaba. Kaz is another bluegrass musician from Japan who has earned the respect of many of the players here in the United States. Following the introduction Maro became good friends with Keith. He has performed with Keith in Japan and visited with Keith at his home in Nashville (although Keith is now living back in California). Maro has a similar relationship with Sammy Shelor. He first met Sammy Shelor and Ron Stewart at bluegrass festivals about ten years ago, when he was living in Ohio.

After recording *Carolina Blue* with Sammy, the two become good friends. During the sessions Sammy and Maro began talking about traveling to Japan together. After Carolina Blue was released and Maro was signed to Copper Creek, Maro called Sammy and said, "Now that the CD is out I think it would be a good time to take that trip to Japan." Maro contacted a promoter in Japan and the two toured that country for a week, playing at various venues with other musicians who they picked up to play with them in each town. Since that trip Maro has spent time visiting with Sammy in Virginia. The song we have transcribed for this issue, which also appears on the audio companion CD, is called "Dan River." Maro said that he chose this name after visiting the Dan River near Sammy's home. He adds, "It is also named after my son, Daniel." The new recording, which has yet to be released, also features Ron Stewart, Sammy Shelor, Mike Compton, Keith Little, Rob Ickes, and Robert Gately. Another great line up!

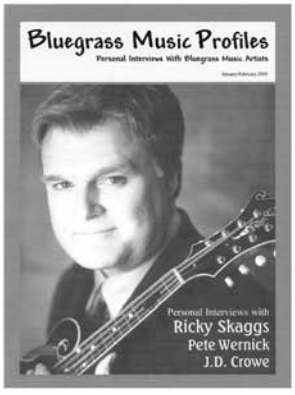
Currently Maro is working to put a band together in Chicago with Doug Knecht (formerly with Chris Jones) to play banjo and Colby Maddox (formerly of Special Consensus) to play mandolin.

Due to some previous health problems Maro has not been on the road for the past few years. However, his health difficulties are behind him and he is ready to hit the road. For more information about Maro or his new band, contact:

Maro Kawabata
PO. Box 213
South Elgin, IL. 60177-0213
TEL(847)460-8316
E mail:maro@newriverside.com

On the following pages we have provided a transcription of Maro's tune "Dan River." The notes indicated as "ghost" notes are simply played lightly.

BLUEGRASS MUSIC PROFILES
Gettin' personal with bluegrass artists!



Bluegrass artists we've gotten personal with include Bobby Osborne, Jimmy Martin, Dale Ann Bradley, IIIrd Tyme Out, J.D. Crowe, Lonesome River Band, Josh Graves, Ralph Stanley, Doyle Lawson, Larry Sparks, Tim Graves, Dave Evans, Mac Wiseman, Mountain Heart, Charlie Waller, Wildfire, Kenny Baker and many more!

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Randy Kohrs is featured in BMP's Jan/Feb issue!

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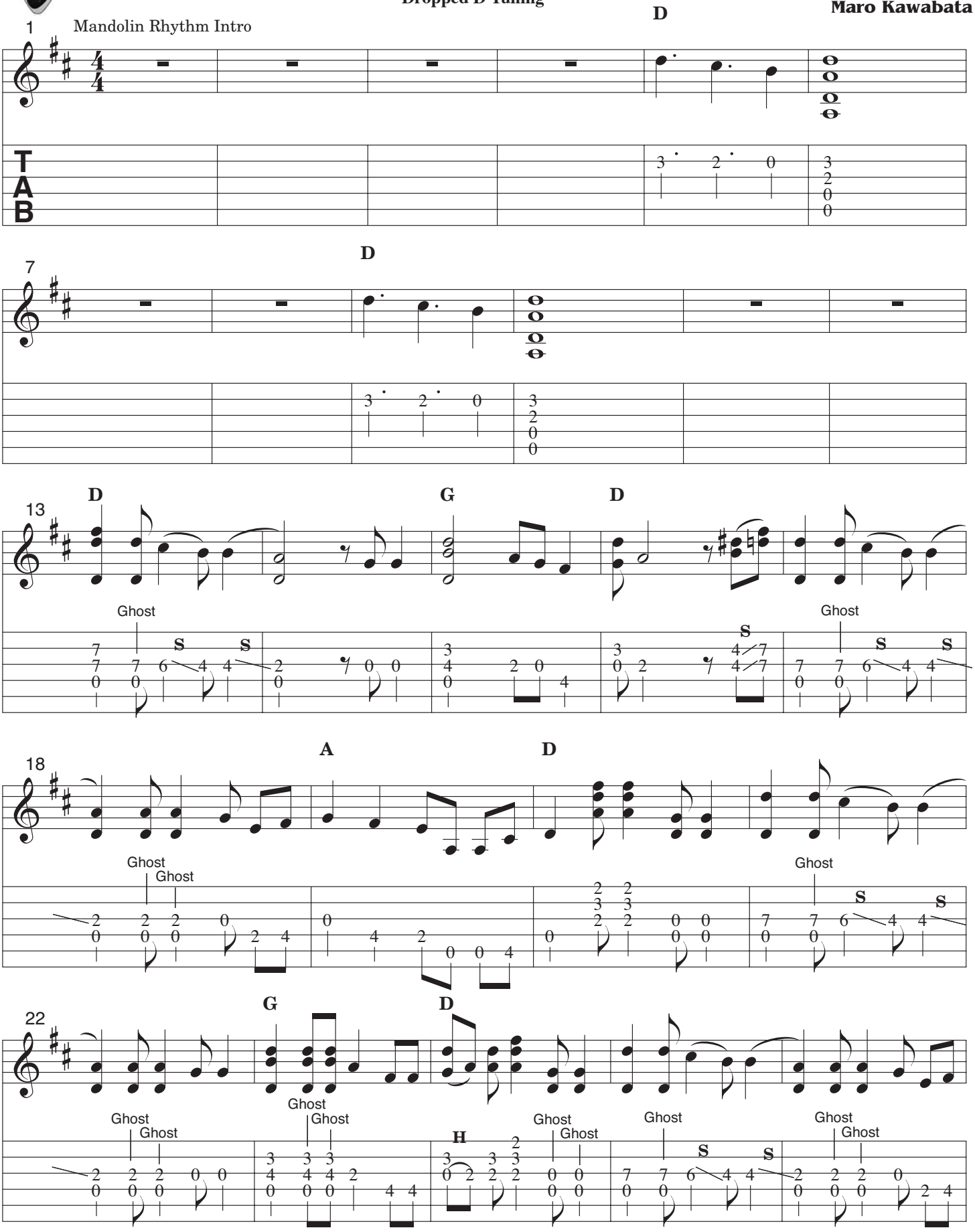
Audio CD
Track 27

Dan River

Dropped D Tuning

Arranged by
Maro Kawabata

1 Mandolin Rhythm Intro

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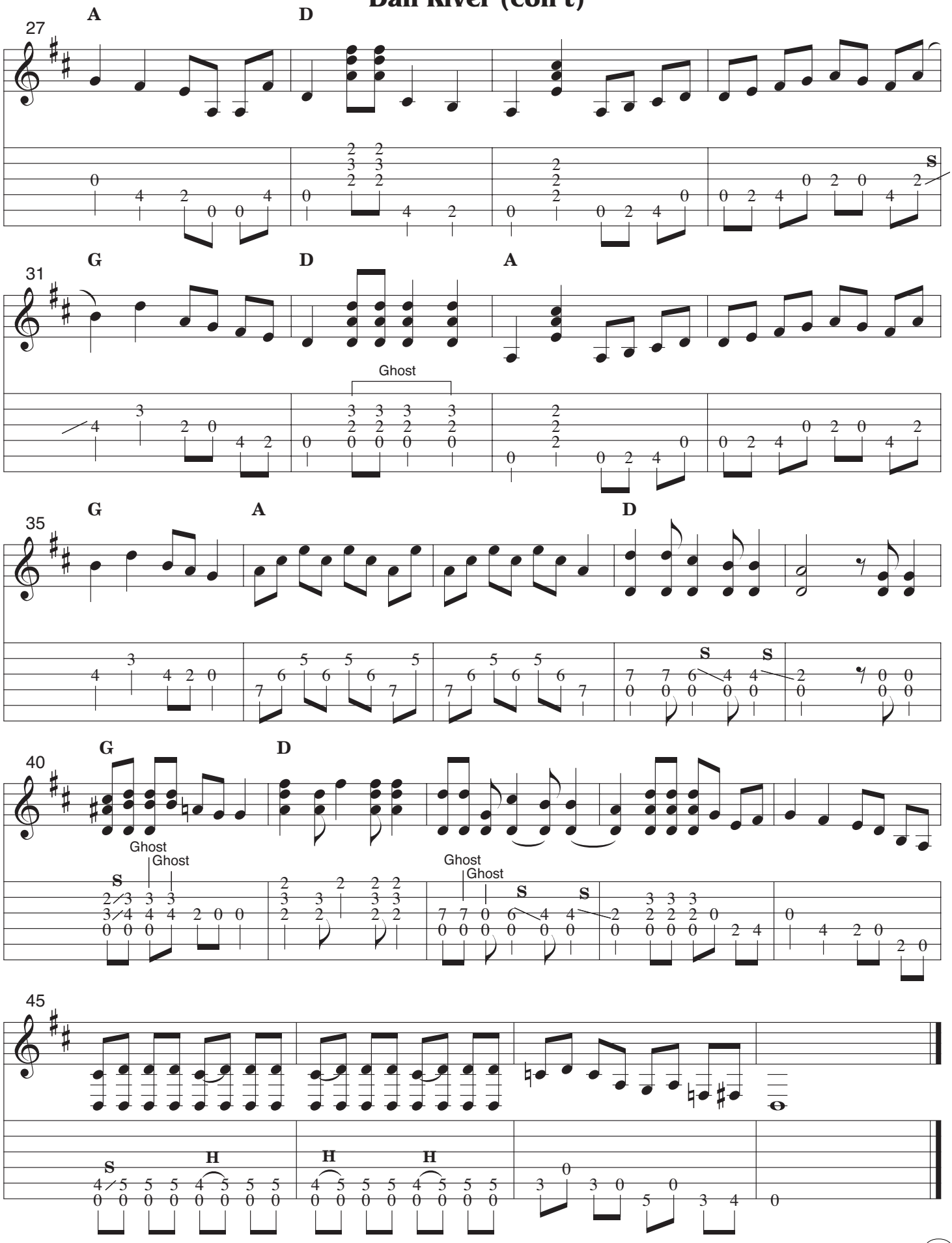

One of our columnists, Mike Maddux, received a letter regarding his last column and felt like sharing both the letter and his response with all of our readers. Here is the letter and Mike's response:

Mike,

Excellent column this month and a great song. Having started out playing blues rock/pop, I have to try hard to keep from falling back into the minor pentonic scales when I am playing. In setting up a rhythm track to practice the transcriptions for "Rocky Road Blues," I noticed that the Sawtelle example is 13 bars and yours is 12. I dug out a Monroe CD and found that it was in the key of C and it might just be my imagination or something, but it seemed to me that the meter changed from verse to verse. As I strummed along, I kept thinking I had the chord changes right, but ended up off somehow. I want to present this song to the people I play with, but I am just wondering if most people would jam this as 12 or 13 bars?

Keep up the good work. I look forward to your column each issue as a source of inspiration.

Jack Peters

Here's Mike's Response:

Hi Jack,

Thanks for the note; glad you are reading the articles.

Re: 13- vs. 12- vs. 16- vs. — well, ordinarily I would think that 13-bar blues was a mistake, but after all, this was Sawtelle... ;^)

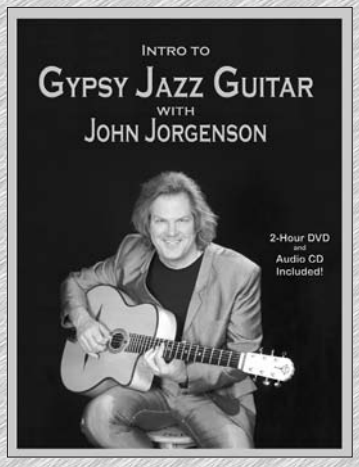
Actually, the first measure is the pickup notes. Unlike jazz/blues/rock players, bluegrass pickers generally play something in the measure leading into the break—fills out the sound—the gap left after the singer phrase stops. My solo starts right on the downbeat because it is a continuation of the previous break.

Stick to the 12-bar blues pattern; some players, Monroe included, and especially, had a unique approach. With a band that is working together all the time, you can let the music breathe, and get away with some interesting twists in the tune. Monroe certainly varied things when he felt that it was the right way to do it.

Note also that the early country blues players (such as Bessie Smith, among others), would not have stuck to a strict meter or a strict 12- or 16-bar blues. Dig out some of the early recordings and you will hear a lot of variation in tempo, timing, and phrasing as they played what they felt, and what seemed to match the verse, rather than making the verse fit the tune. Bill might have been influenced by that sound in his incorporation of the blues as well, which would certainly have allowed more freedom in the timing.

best/m.

New from *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine!*



Intro to Gypsy Jazz Guitar with John Jorgenson

In this first of three volumes of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine's* new Gypsy Jazz Guitar instructional series John Jorgenson has designed and presented one of the most complete acoustic guitar instructional methods available on the market today. Each volume of this three-part series includes a 2-hour instructional DVD, an audio CD with practice audio tracks, and a full format book which presents all of the theoretical information, chord charts, fret board diagrams, music notation, and tablature for the material presented on the DVD.

In this first volume ***Intro to Gypsy Jazz Guitar***, Jorgenson provides the foundational information and practice material necessary for you to gain an understanding of the Gypsy jazz guitar style. The first half of this volume addresses the important element of Gypsy jazz rhythm. After discussing correct right hand rhythm technique, Jorgenson teaches the closed chord forms of a basic blues progression and then systematically introduces new chords into that progression to add "color" and "spice" while also introducing you to the characteristic "moving chord" style of Gypsy rhythm. After addressing the basic blues progression, Jorgenson then transitions into the more Gypsy sounding minor blues progression and introduces the "three-note" chords which are prominent in Gypsy style rhythm guitar.

The second half of this first volume addresses soloing. Here Jorgenson not only lays the groundwork of Gypsy jazz soloing, but in the process also presents you with a method which serves to greatly enhance your understanding of the fingerboard and improvisational playing. Jorgenson teaches arpeggios, note maps, lead patterns, and Gypsy techniques in every area of the fingerboard and in various keys. Additionally, he masterfully shows how the arpeggios and patterns relate to one another.

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Working with Physical Limitations

by Joe Carr

I thought long and hard about writing this particular article. Discussion of my personal life seemed inappropriate for this forum. Only when I realized everyone has limitations and that my solutions to guitar playing problems might be of help to others, did I decide to write it.

In the summer of 2003, after ten years of progressive weakness and poor coordination on my right side, I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS). It was a great relief to finally have an answer and some treatment options for a condition which doctors had previously been unable to explain. It took a banjo-picking MS expert to recognize my symptoms. I can never fully express my gratitude to Dr. Vernon Rowe of Kansas City's MidAmerica Neuroscience Institute.

As a string musician and particularly as a guitarist, I became aware of some problems long before others might have. While doctors generally are thrilled if you are able to touch your nose with your eyes closed, we guitar pickers use much higher levels of fine muscle control. Ten to fifteen years ago, I began to notice increasing difficulty with fast tempos during lead and rhythm. I initially chalked this up to poor practice habits or the effects of age. "You know Joe, you just can't pick like a twenty year old any more!"

My long-time friend and musical partner Alan Munde also witnessed the decline. It became more and more difficult for me to play rhythm for a 45-minute set. It would start out all right, but I would quickly tire as the set progressed. Although I never dropped a pick, I was always afraid I would. I had to be very careful not to drag down the music with my rhythm. Since Alan and I worked as a duo, it was very important that I set a strong rhythm. It's hard to hide when there are only two musicians playing!

Because of these musical problems and walking difficulties, I decided to stop touring with Alan several years ago. Although I still play mandolin, fiddle and guitar as a teacher and for fun, I have stopped traveling as a professional.

I reflected on the changes I have made in my guitar playing over these years to accommodate my condition. These suggestions could be helpful to anyone experiencing difficulties for physical, medical, injury, or age-related reasons.

Guitar Size: I played a full sized "D" model guitar (as all good bluegrassers are supposed to do) throughout my early professional career. In the early 1990s however, I bought a custom made Bohannon 000-28 copy (12 fret) by Harry Miller. The thinner and smaller body size instantly helped my right hand picking. The shorter scale of the 000 also made reaching first position chords with the left hand much easier. This guitar is very responsive and I don't feel I lost anything with the move to a smaller guitar. Harry used medium gauge (.13-.56) strings. On the shorter 000 scale, this set felt a little looser than on a D model.

String Gauge: In the mid 1990s I tried a slightly lighter set of strings for the Bohannon. The .12-.54 medium-light set was easier to play and the Bohannon surprised me. It sounded as good as with mediums. Hey! This was working!

Pick Gauge: Several years ago I tried some different picks. For all my touring years I had used a thick pick. Fender 1.21mm picks became my favorites. As these became too stiff to me, I started using Fender heavies, which are easier to use and exert less pressure on the thumb. Although there is some loss of tone with these thinner picks, the result is acceptable. I experimented with Fender mediums but since I use the point of the pick, the sound was too "dinky." If you use the rounded shoulders of the pick, a medium might still produce an acceptable fuller tone. I am currently using a nylon Dunlop in .88mm or .73mm thickness. The textured top of the pick improves my grip. I keep a variety of picks in my pocket.

Technique: Several issues ago I presented some rhythm strategies for playing at rapid tempos. I have used all those approaches even at more moderate tempos.

Sitting to Play: As much as possible, I sit in a chair or on a stool to perform. The added stability helps with accuracy. Now that I think about it, I always sat in the studio when I was recording

Strap Length: When I do stand now, I adjust my strap so that the guitar hangs in the same location as when I'm sitting. This adds to consistency.

Arrangement: As extended runs of eighth notes became more difficult to play at concert and jam session speeds, I began to vary the note lengths in my solos. In some ways, my playing may have become more musical.

Set List: Although I don't perform regularly now, I try to arrange songs to my advantage when I do. A fast song featuring the whole band might be followed by a fiddle/banjo duet. This allows me recovery time. The audience will never know why you picked a particular song order, but it can make a world of difference.

The bottom line here is that there is lots of great music to be made even if you do have physical limitations. We here at *FGM* write articles about the greatest flatpickers in the world. Many of us will never achieve that level of performance. I promise you there is a ten year old out there somewhere that can play everything you can play and twice as fast! But you have a lot to offer. Remember why you started playing in the first place. Accommodate a little, learn a new tune or two and have fun!

I am very interested in your stories of working through difficulties in order to play music. Please write me at joecarr@acousticmusician.com with your stories or requests for future columns.

THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

Dark Hollow

After several columns featuring fiddle tunes we now return to flatpicking's other side: playing lead for a vocal tune.

While song melodies are almost always simpler than those of fiddle tunes, creating solos over them is in some ways more challenging. This is because fiddle tunes, with their eighth notes already mapped out, are pretty much ready-to-go for flatpicking whereas song melodies require some arranging and tweaking to sound right on the guitar.

The good news is that the ways in which flatpickers enhance song melodies—with strums, with between-phrase licks, and with crosspicking—can readily be applied from tune to tune; it's a learnable language of embellishment.

And I've chosen the bluegrass classic "Dark Hollow" for today's encounter with this language.

The original language of embellishment on acoustic guitar for song melodies in America was "Carter-style": picking the melody out on the bass strings punctuated by strums (after the longer melody notes to allow them to sustain). This is still a fine approach to simple soloing, and "Dark Hollow" opens this way.

But, as flatpicking matured, its language of embellishment also did. In the wake of guitarists like Norman Blake and Clarence White, strums (and chords) other than standard-issue Carter made their presence felt, as did bursts of crosspicking and cool between-phrase licks. And all of these techniques are utilized in this arrangement.

As you will see, there's nothing really overtly complicated here. And this was by design; I wanted to make this arrangement accessible to most of you. And yet—in keeping with the venerable "it's simple but it ain't easy" formulation—there's considerable right hand finesse involved in making this arrangement sing.

For starters, keep the melody squarely in mind. When playing of a tune like this I literally sing it in my head as I play, envisioning each melody note along with the specific syllable affiliated with it (I'd ra-ther live in some dark hol-low). And those are the notes that should be really punched out as you play a lead. On the opposite end of the volume spectrum are the strums. Apart from the big strum on the G7 chord (which gets some gas since it represents a melody note) the strums should all be quieter than the melody notes; they are the background glue. So making sure that your melody notes are punchy and that your strums are relaxed and softer is the first order of business here.

(One of the great freedoms of Norman Blake's great solo style is the realization that, if you keep the melody notes out front, than you can really have almost anything happening in the chordal realm as long as you resolve back to the familiar ground. The strums following the G7 chord in this arrangement are a prime example: they consist mostly of the open top three strings. But know what? If they're in the correct volume relation to the melody notes then not only doesn't it matter, but it actually sounds more interesting.)

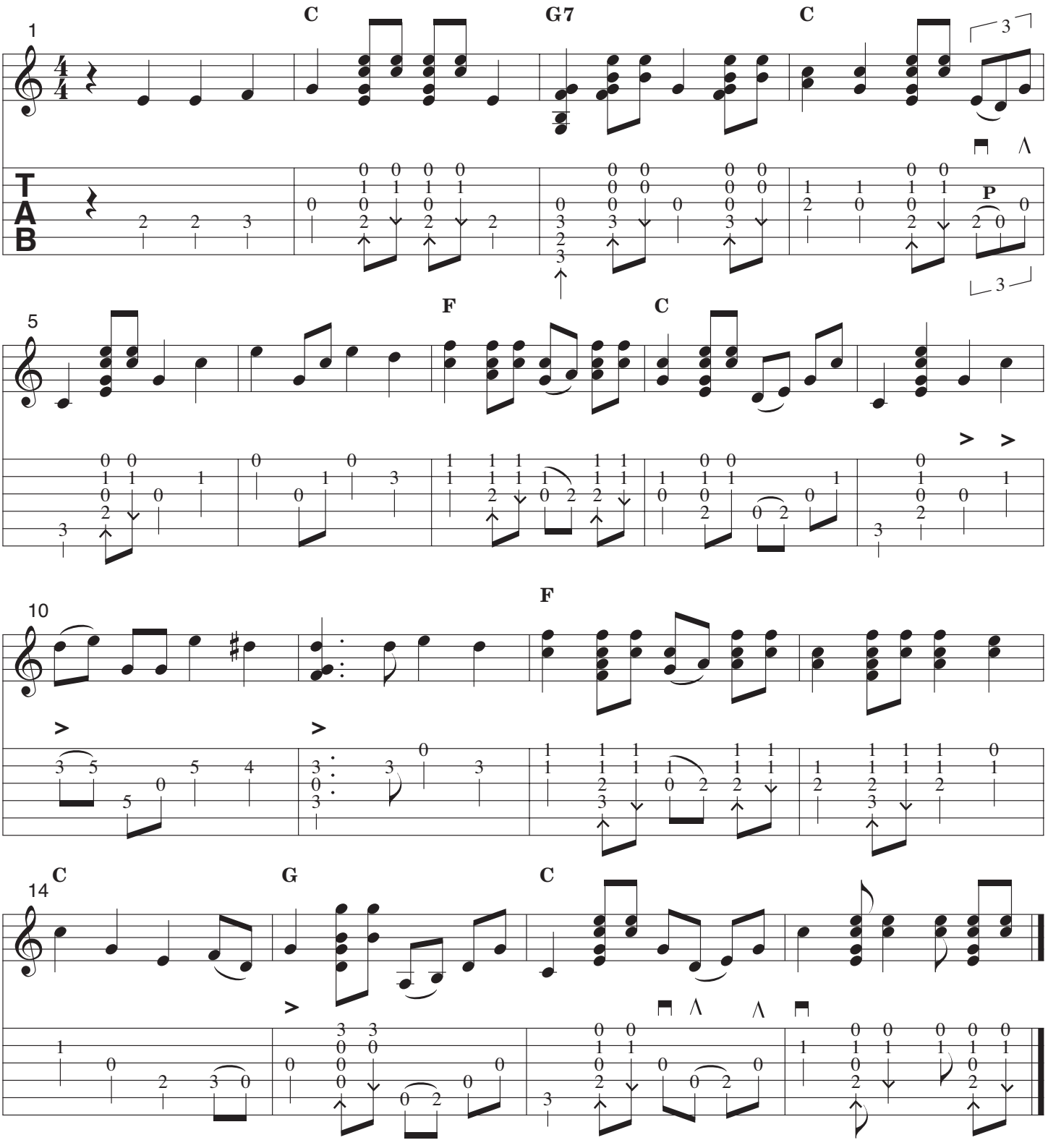
Next we have the between-phrase licks, all of which involve dashes of crosspicking. Notice how a little crosspicking can go a long way; it sounds good even in small doses. Also consider how the licks themselves embellish the pauses: they offer a complimentary flourish yet don't call too much attention to themselves and distract. (And they can be readily used to assist with the pauses in other songs.)

Lastly, our old friend the rest stroke (each instance of which in noted in the tab with a ">" symbol) helps out with some added melodic power and dynamics.

Orrin Star is an award-winning guitar, banjo and mandolin player who now lives and teaches in the Washington, DC area. The 1976 National Flatpicking Champion, he has toured and recorded widely, is the author of Hot Licks for Bluegrass Guitar and now performs mostly solo and in a duo with Jimmy Gaudreau. See

Audio CD
Tracks 29-30

Dark Hollow

Arranged by
Orrin Star

Sharpening the Axe
by Jeff Troxel

Standard Music Notation

I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to write this column for *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*—thanks Dan! I've been a subscriber for many years and I have great respect for this magazine and the other contributors. In this column I'll be focusing on ways to improve various aspects of musicianship ("sharpening the axe") and I hope you'll find these discussions useful. Please feel free to contact me with your feedback and ideas.

In this first column, and the next few, I'll be dealing with standard notation. Music is a form of communication and language is an appropriate metaphor to describe it. Notation then could be called the written language of music. The two most common forms of notation available to guitarists are tablature (TAB) and standard notation (SN). Think of TAB as a sort of local dialect used by guitarists and SN as a larger, more complex language used universally by all musicians. The further we venture out from the roots of our tradition the more useful it is to be fluent in SN.

Having said that, I'd like to stop and give a respectful nod to our old friend TAB. It pre-dates SN and has been a very useful tool for communicating musical ideas between players for centuries. There's no denying it has a valid and, most likely, permanent place among guitarists and other string players (See http://sologuitarist.net/tablature.htm for a short history of TAB). I'd also like to point out that the ability to read music shouldn't be confused with the ability to play music. While the two things are linked in many ways, I know some incredible guitarists who don't read a note of SN.

So why should flatpickers learn to read SN? The following are some good reasons:

1) It translates to all instruments and connects us to the larger world of music.
2) The majority of music in the flatpicking tradition requires minimal reading skills which could be acquired quickly and with little effort.
3) SN provides a visual connection between melody and harmony that helps clarify music theory.
4) If you ever plan to pursue a formal music education the ability to read SN is an absolute requirement.
5) If you can read music you're better prepared to write music.

The notation most commonly seen these days is the SN/TAB combination. This system is a compromise between the old world and an emerging one and we're probably stuck with it for a while. Perhaps putting up with the visual clutter, awkward page-turns and the redundancy of two notation lines is a small price to pay for peace. But personally I'd like to see publishers offer two versions of written material; one with TAB and one without. Kind of the way computer software companies produce Mac and PC versions of software. I know it's possible. I'll do my part to help create the demand and I hope you will too. If you're willing to hone your reading skills I'll be providing some ideas, strategies and exercises over the next few months to make the process as painless as possible.

A good way to start is by setting a goal. Let's say that by the time the next issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* comes out you will have learned all the natural notes on the guitar in first position (in other words, the notes found in the key of C). Example 1 shows these notes in both SN and TAB. Our goal allows eight weeks to learn these seventeen notes. That doesn't sound so bad, does it?

We also need a strategy. Most available guitar methods present the notes one string at a time, giving you exercises to help absorb the material slowly and adding new notes over time. This is a proven method and I recommend it. To get started set a metronome at 60 beats-per-minute then play through Example 2, holding each half note for two beats. Do the same with Example 3, holding each quarter note for one beat.

Use the following guidelines as you play through each exercise:

- Keep your eyes on the page, not the guitar.
- Play in precise time with the metronome.
- Force your eyes to stay slightly ahead of where you're playing, just like reading a book.
- Say the name of each note as you play it.
- Adjust the tempo of the metronome to the level at which you are able to play with a minimum of mistakes.
- Breathe and stay calm as you play. You and I both know you can play faster than you are while doing these exercises but that's not the point.
- Resist the temptation to stop and fix your mistakes. Keep moving forward through the music without interrupting the beat.
- Avoid rehearsing the exercises since that will defeat their purpose. Play through them once or twice a day and move on.

When you're comfortable with the 1st string notes, move on to Example 4. It contains several exercises mixing the notes and rhythms together. Examples 5 and 6 introduce the notes on the 2nd string following the same format we used with the 1st' string and Example 7 mixes the two strings together.

By now you're starting to see the strategy emerge. Spend enough time on each string to get a handle on it before adding the next one. If you add a new string each week you'll reach the goal with time to spare. Review often so you don't forget the old notes.

You'll need to find additional reading material for the first two strings as well as

strings 3 through 6. Basic guitar methods such as those published by Mel Bay or Hal Leonard are ideal since they follow a similar format to what I've outlined. You can also buy blank staff paper and write out some of your own exercises. Try to hear the sound of each note in your head as you write it.

Ten minutes a day is enough to get started. Remember that progress is made in small increments and it's better to do a little each day than to do a long session once or twice a week. Until next time, good luck and have fun.

Jeff Troxel is an award-winning guitarist, songwriter, and composer who lives and teaches in Cody, WY. He holds music degrees from Berklee College of Music and the University of Southern California. He has taught guitar at USC, the University of Laverne and Northwest College. Jeff is the 2003 National Flatpicking Champion and is currently on the faculty at Central Wyoming College. He divides his time between teaching and performing. www.jefftroxel.com

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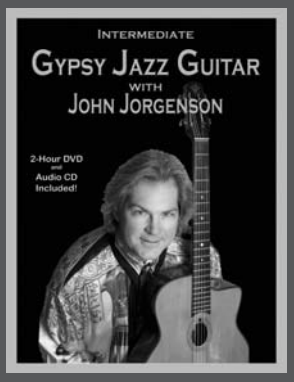

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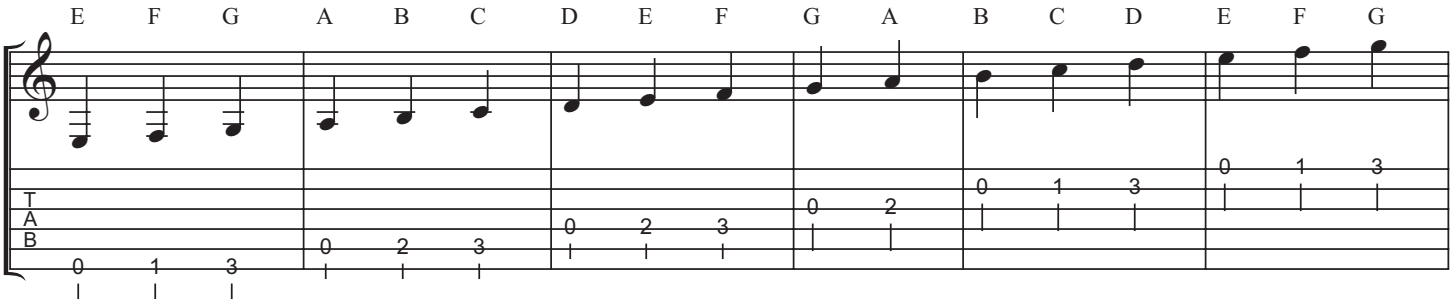
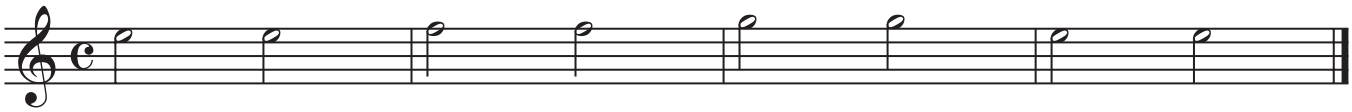
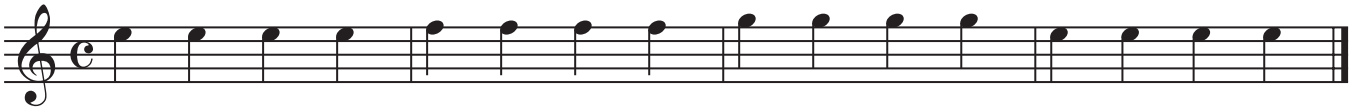
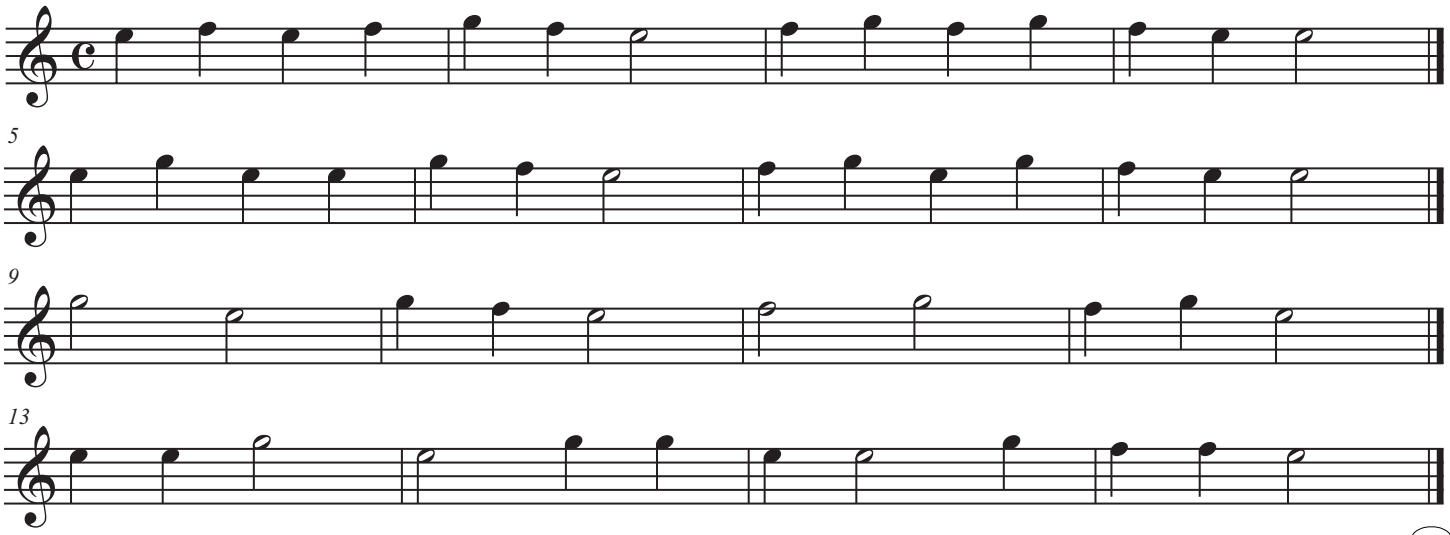
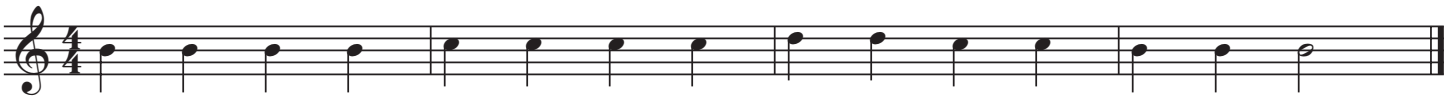
Examples:

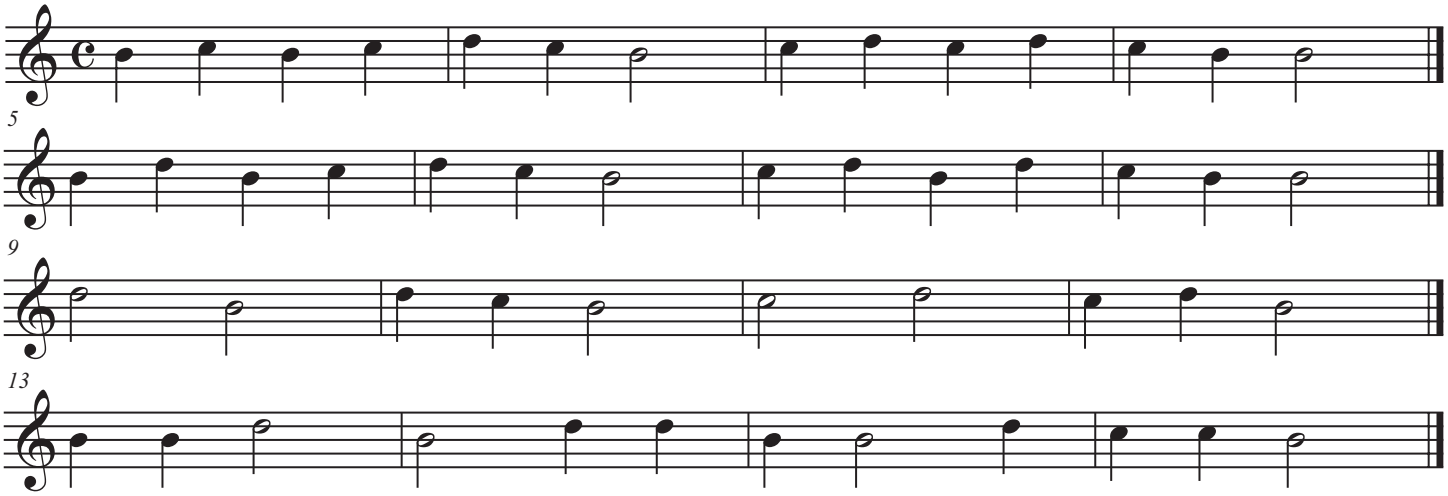
Example 1

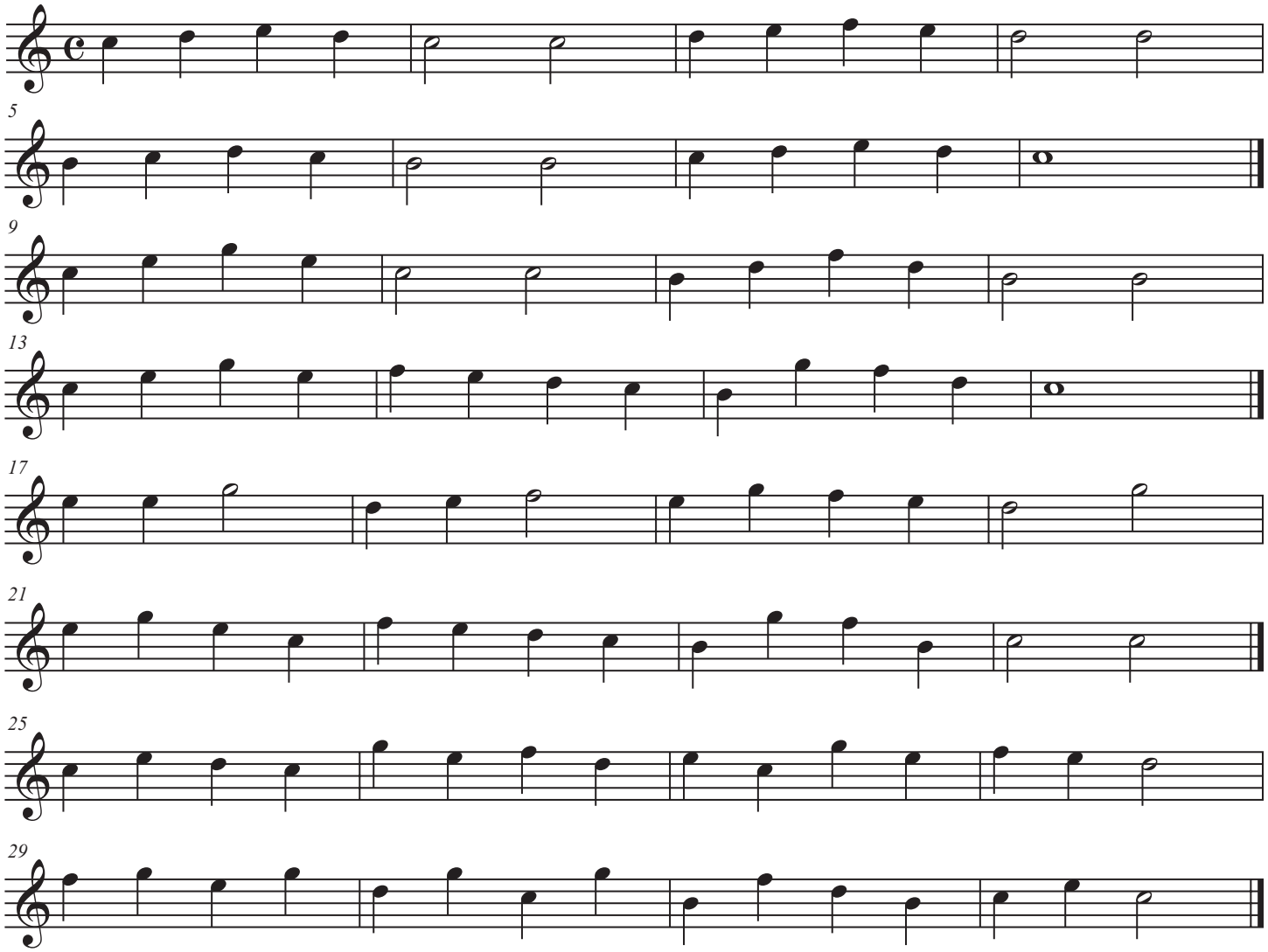


Example 2

Example 3

Example 4



Example 5

Example 6



Example 7

Clinch Mountain Backstep

by Dix Bruce

Here's a couple of cool little solos to "Clinch Mountain Backstep." Most of the flat pickers that I know who play this tune place their melody or solo in an upper octave on the first three strings. The solos below are pitched an octave lower and use strings 3 through 6. If you're not used to playing eighth note leads on these lower strings, it can be a challenge to both reach the strings and to play the notes accurately. As I always say, take it slowly to build the muscle memory in your hand and arm and speed up only gradually.

In writing out these solos, I tried to stay as close to the melody as possible. Solo two has more eighth notes than solo one and thus may be a bit more difficult to play. Difficulty aside, it's always nice to have a second solo in your repertoire.

I like the sound of sliding up to a note and then playing the same note on an open string. You'll get a chance to do this several times on the 6th string (measures 8, 9, 10, 12, 18, 27, 28, 29, 31, and 37) where you fret the string and slide up to the 5th fret A note. Immediately after that you'll play the open 5th string A. It's a nice effect and I'm sure you've heard it before.

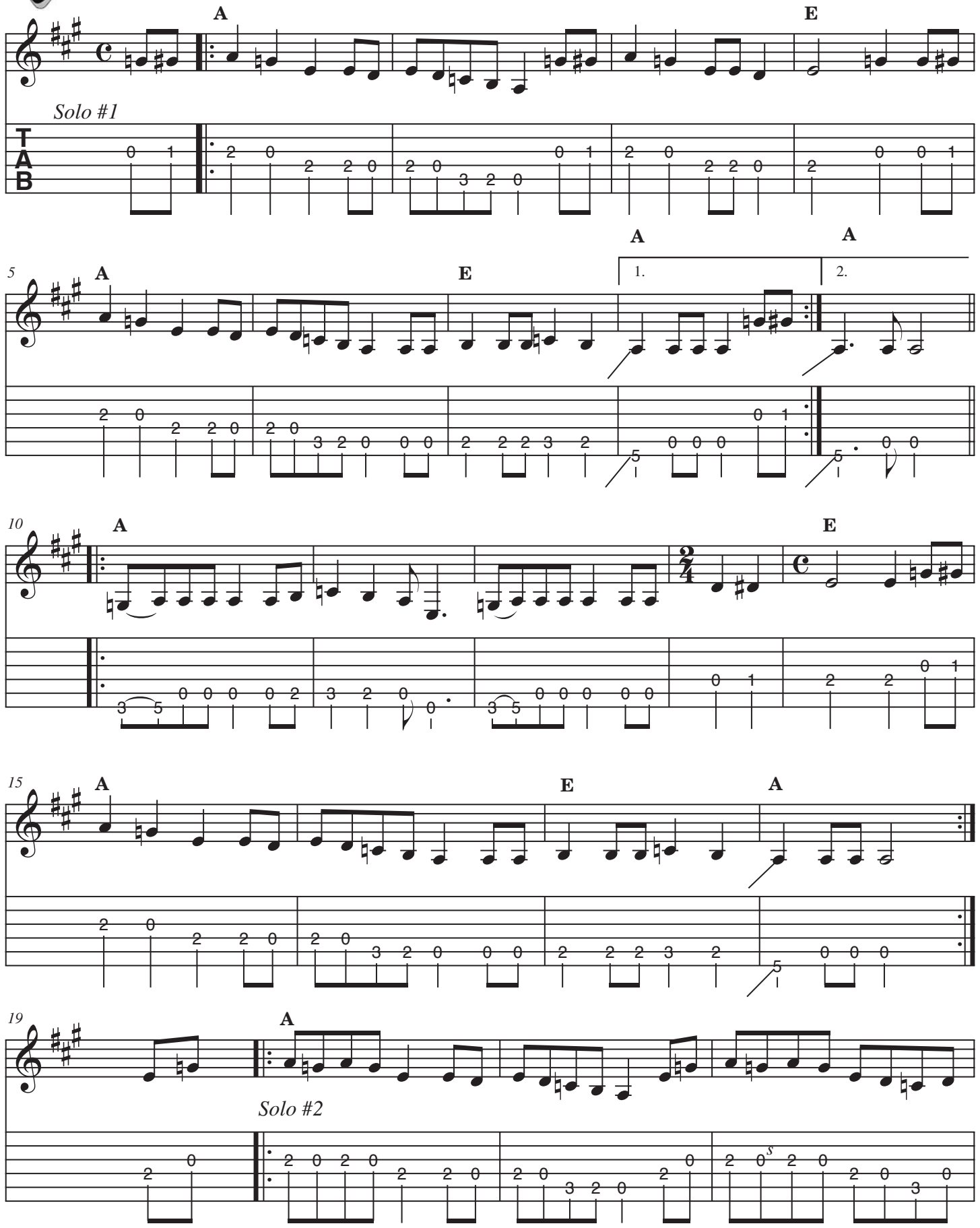
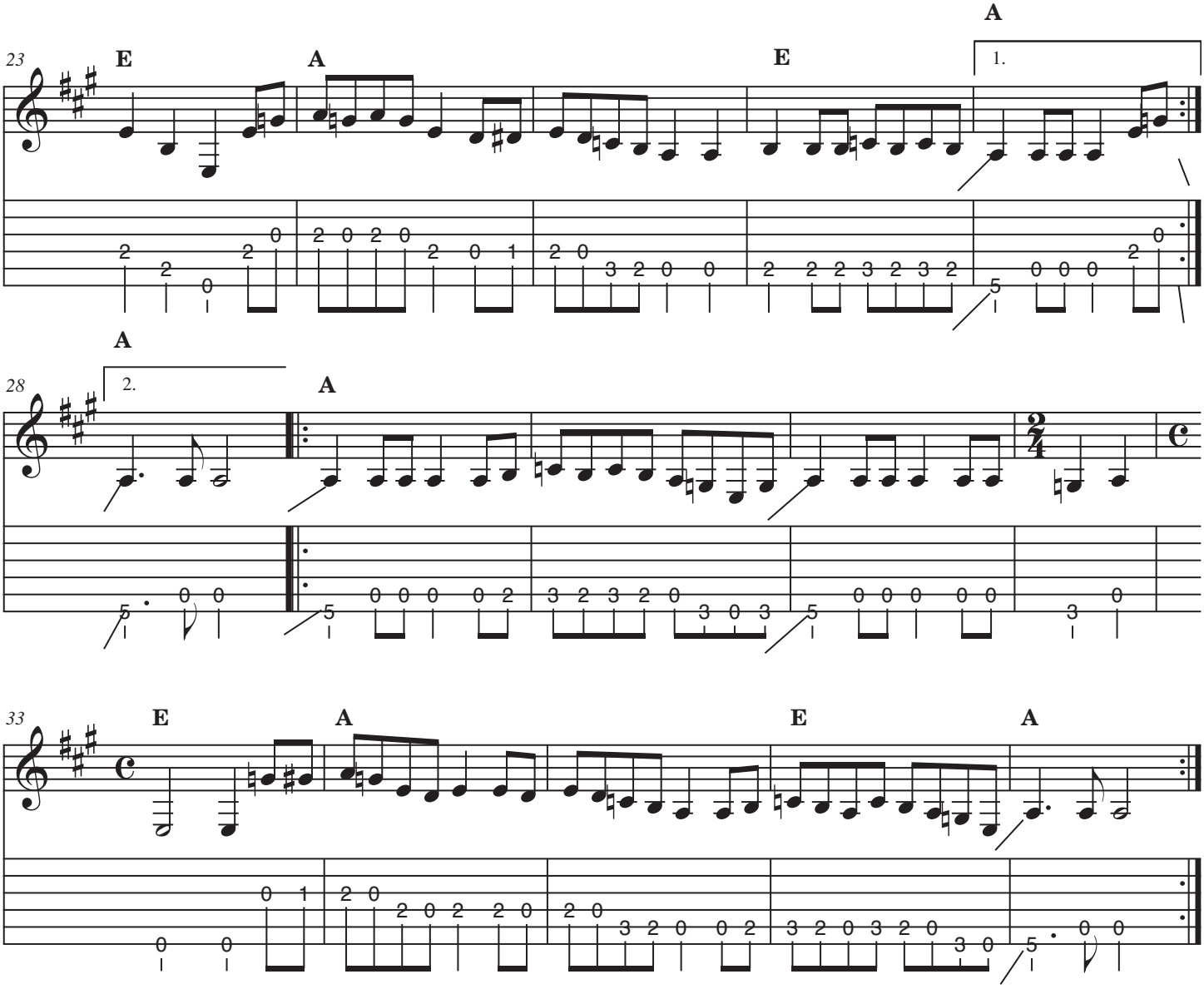
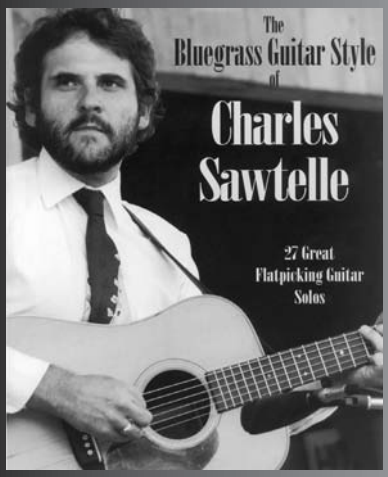
"Clinch Mountain Backstep" has a modal melody and that's what largely responsible for its distinctive sound. The melody is written in the key of A, which would normally have G#s, C#s along with F#s. Here, most of the G#s and C#s are played as G and C naturals. It's similar to an A blues scale with flatted sevenths (G naturals) and thirds (C naturals). However, the chordal accompaniment is in the key of A major. The major and modal rub up against one another to give that great nebulous tonality that's rooted in the ancient tones of long ago.

Good luck!

Dix Bruce's video Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar *teaches Carter-style lead guitar solos on several songs in several keys. It's available from his web site. Dix's latest book & CD set is* Getting into Bluegrass Mandolin *from Mel Bay Publications. It's also available online from http://www.musixnow.com where you can review sound clips. Dix and Jim Nunally are currently performing clinics for Martin Guitars. Watch for one in your town.*

Audio CD
Tracks 32 - 35

Clinch Mountain Backstep

Arranged by Dix Bruce

Clinch Mountain Backstep (con't)



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Scale and Chordal Thinking

Using standard tuning (EADGBE), the fingerboard is arranged in a very logical manner. It is possible to play in any key, in any position on the neck. We find that some chords and scales are easier to play in certain positions, which is why hand position shifts are common.

Within this article we begin an initial examination of which scales and licks fit over which chords. The examples are presented in closed positions in order that they may be moved and played in alternate keys easily.

The main point of this study is not the licks or even the tune. They are presented as examples. I want you to understand how to find the notes in the scale from the chord position. From now on, when you begin to memorize a song, spend part of your time thinking about the chords, the scales, and where the melody falls on the guitar.

C Major Chord Position

Exercise 1 begins in Db. This position is the same as first position C Major, moved up one fret to Db. Start by fingering the chord as shown in measure I. Play through the arpeggio as indicated, moving up the neck to 10th position, and back down. If you have a cutaway, play to at least 12th positions. Say the name of the chord at each position; this will assist you in association of the position, the fingering, and the key. All notes are to be played with a strict down-up-down-up (DUDU) picking pattern.

Moving the Scale Form

In exercise 2 we see the Db major scale. In the same way as the chord/arpeggio exercise, this form moves to D major, Eb, and so on, up the fingerboard.

Practice it in all positions, just like exercise 1, up and down the neck. The major scale is practiced to the ninth, then using the full fingerboard.

Use the metronome to keep your timing steady, and accent the first of each group of four notes. Exercise 2 shows the notes in the scale that are available to you using the full width of the fingerboard without a hand position shift.

You see, by moving this simple pattern up the neck, you can play the full width of the fingerboard in any key desired.

In exercises 4 and 5, we continue to explore the notes in the chord, using the D major and B minor forms, with some of the scale runs. Remember, the relative minor to a major key has the same key signature, but starts on the note that is a minor third below the major. For D major, count down a minor third (or down 3 frets) to B. The minor scale has been presented in a previous column, so I am showing an exercise that uses notes from the minor to create a simple melody. This is an example of improvising with this scale and chord form. Notice that the chord is a Bminor7th, the relative minor to D major. The upper triad is the D major. Because this is a closed position chord, it can be moved to any position desired, for example in third position, Eb major triad with a C in the root is a C minor7th. The notes of Eb triad are Eb, G, Bb. A C minor 7th has the notes C-Eb-G-Bb.
Practice the chord and exercise in all positions, just like in exercise I.

To round out our study, here are some commonly used chordal style licks (including an A7 lick from Rice/Grier, some closed licks in Bmin, and a final lick in D). Move them around. Hold the chord position and experiment by playing the notes of the chord individually, with varying rhythm and accents. Make up your own licks based upon the chords.

"New Five Cents"

Not only a beautiful old-time tune, "New Five Cents" readily lends it self to the scale/chord thinking presented above.

After a brief internet search, I found out that several recorded versions of this tune are available. David Grier recorded it with Mike Compton on *Climbing the Walls*; Paul Warren, the great fiddler and side man with Flatt and Scruggs, among others, provided a version of this tune which is available on the compilation CD *Worlds Greatest Fiddler*.

For the recording first time through I played the chords pretty straight; on subsequent variations I played some alternate chords for effect. Try using A9 - D11 - Bmin7 and experiment.

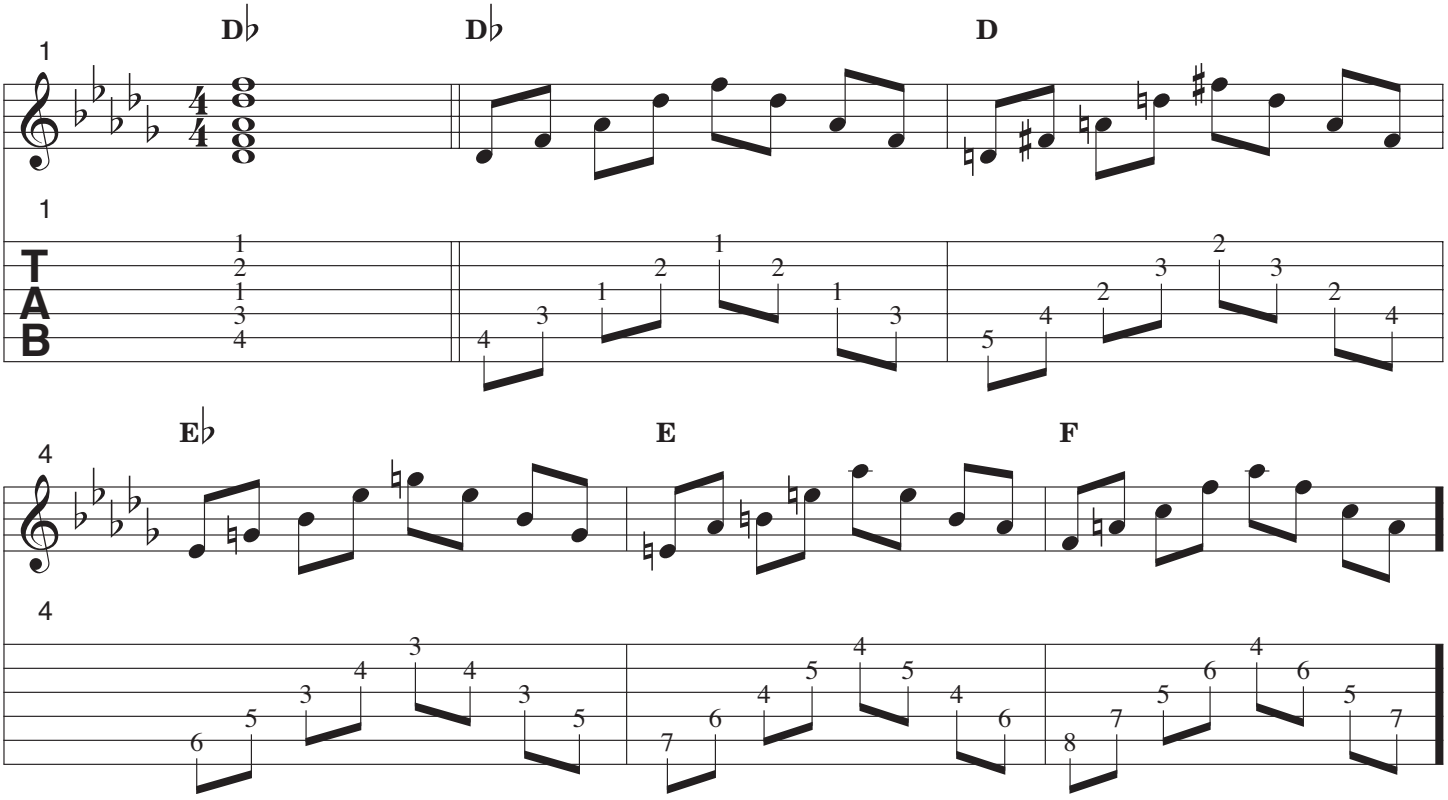
That's all for now... have fun, and keep on pickin'!

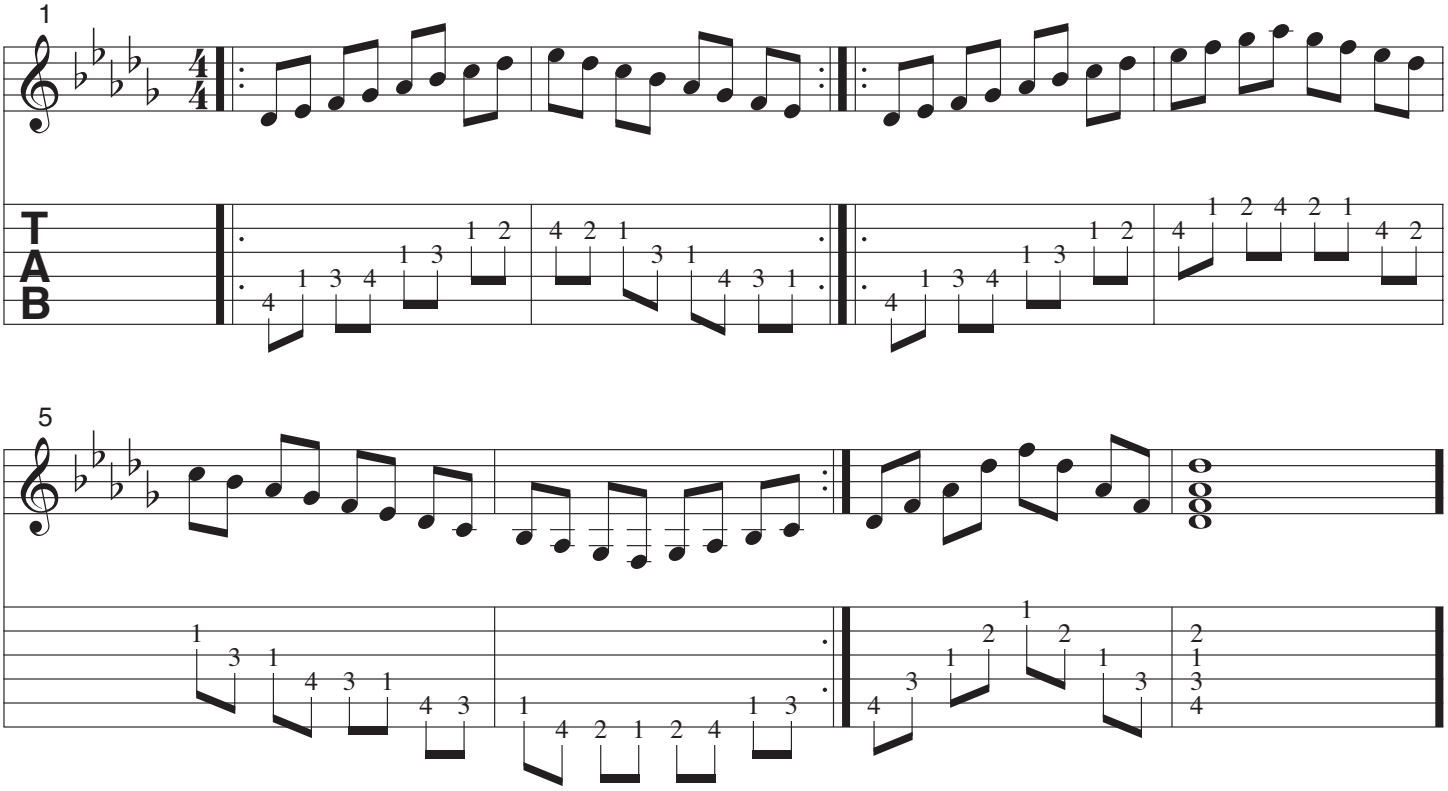
Mike plays several styles of music, including classical, jazz, bluegrass, Irish styles, and his own style "grassology." He lives in the mountains in Colorado. You can drop him a line via the website: http://madduxband.com. Be certain to mention FGM in the title.

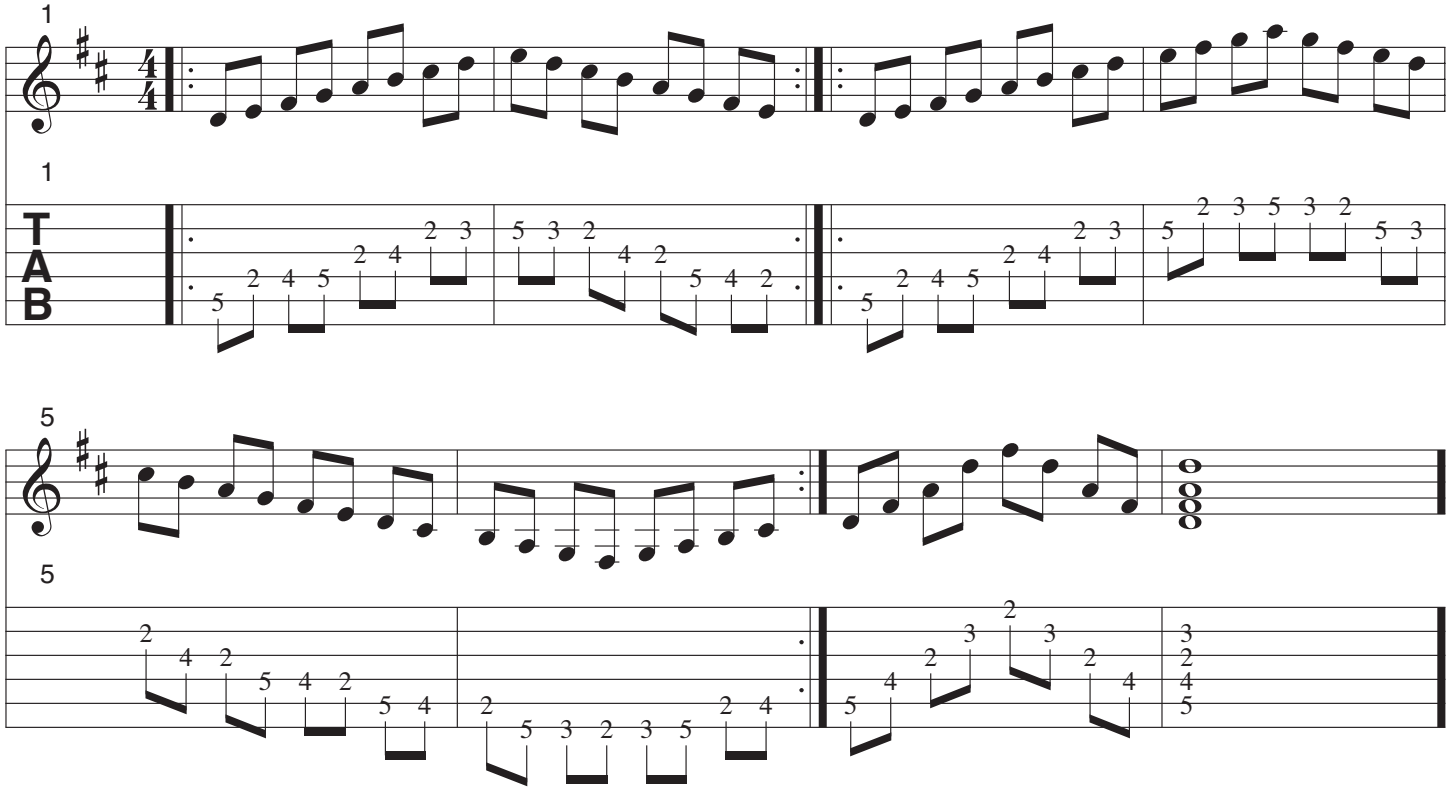
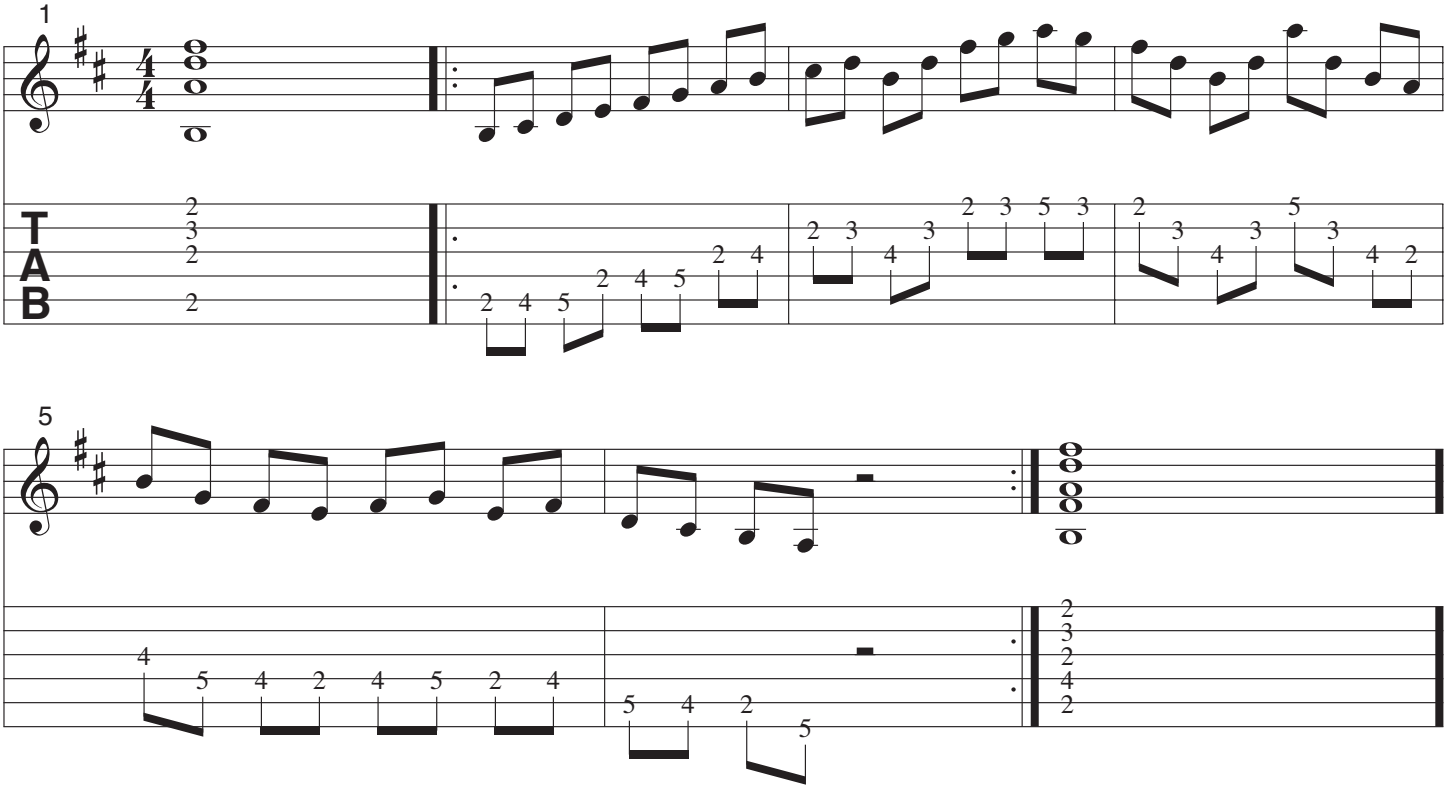
Audio CD
Track 37 & 38

Exercises

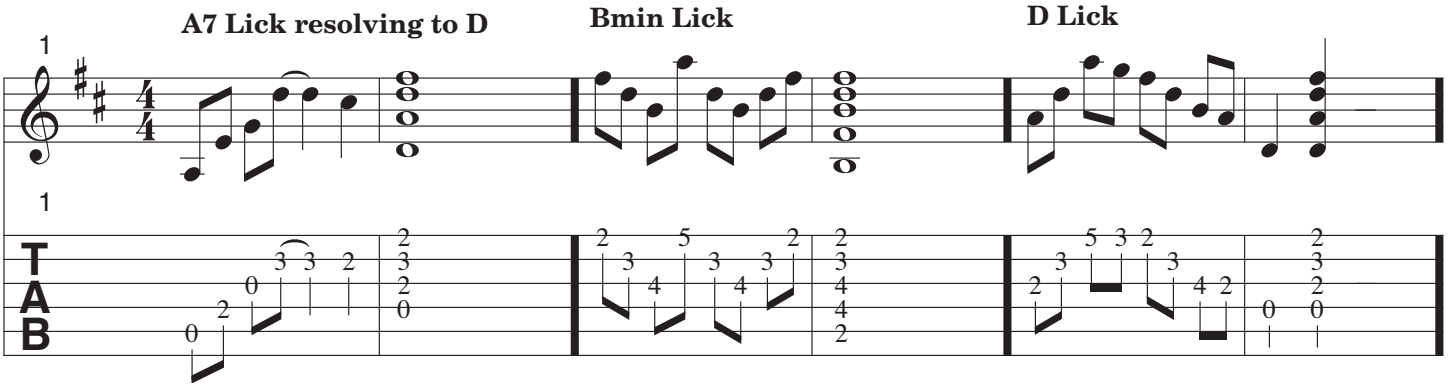
Exercise 1: Scale Runs in Db Position



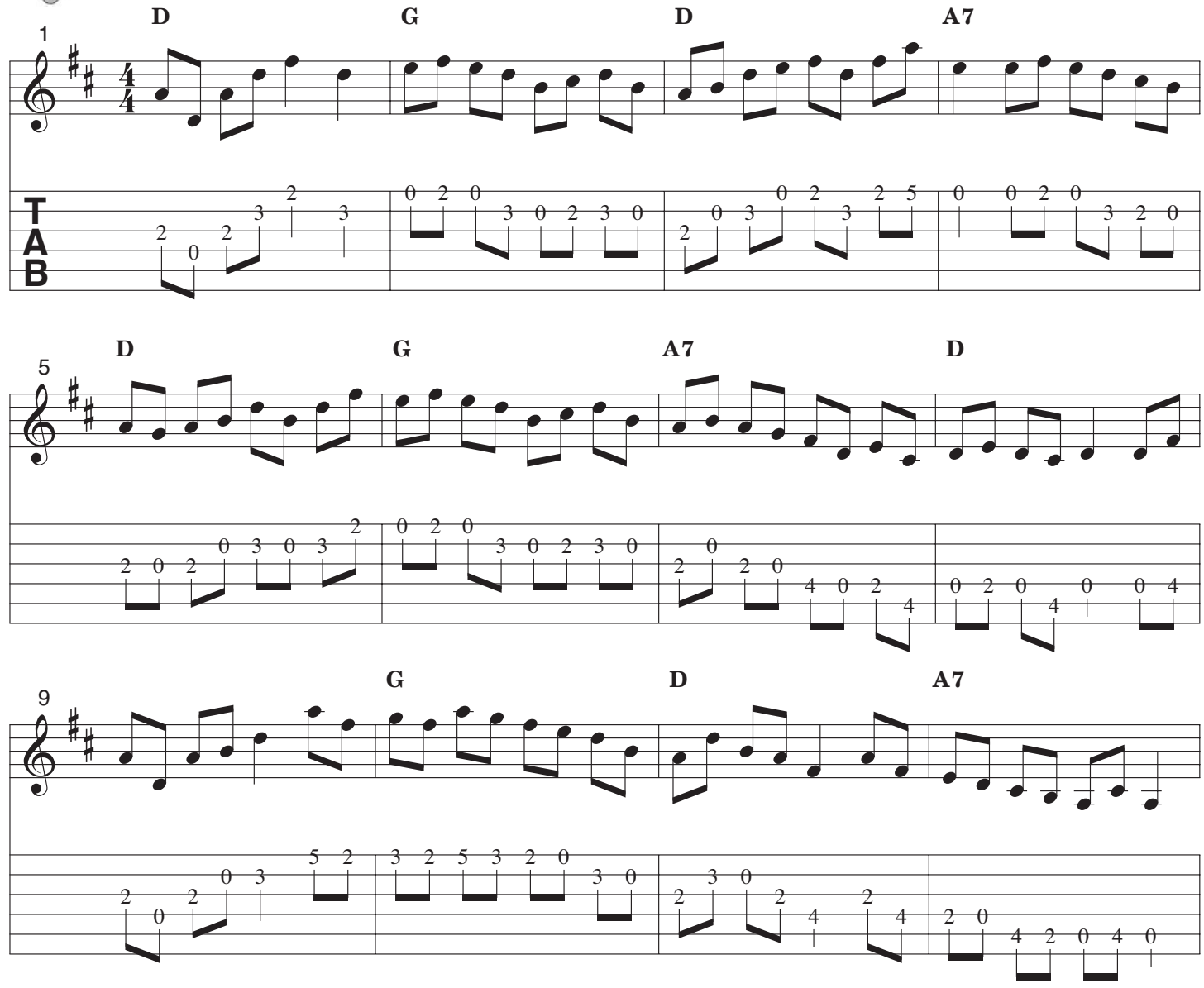
Exercise 2: The major Scale - Repeat 8-16 times without stopping.

Audio CD
Tracks 39 & 40

Exercise 3: The D major Scale - Repeat 8-16 times without stopping.

Exercise 4: Minor 7th and Minor Runs

Exercises (con't)

Exercise 5: Common Chordal Licks



Audio CD
Track 41-43

New Five Cents

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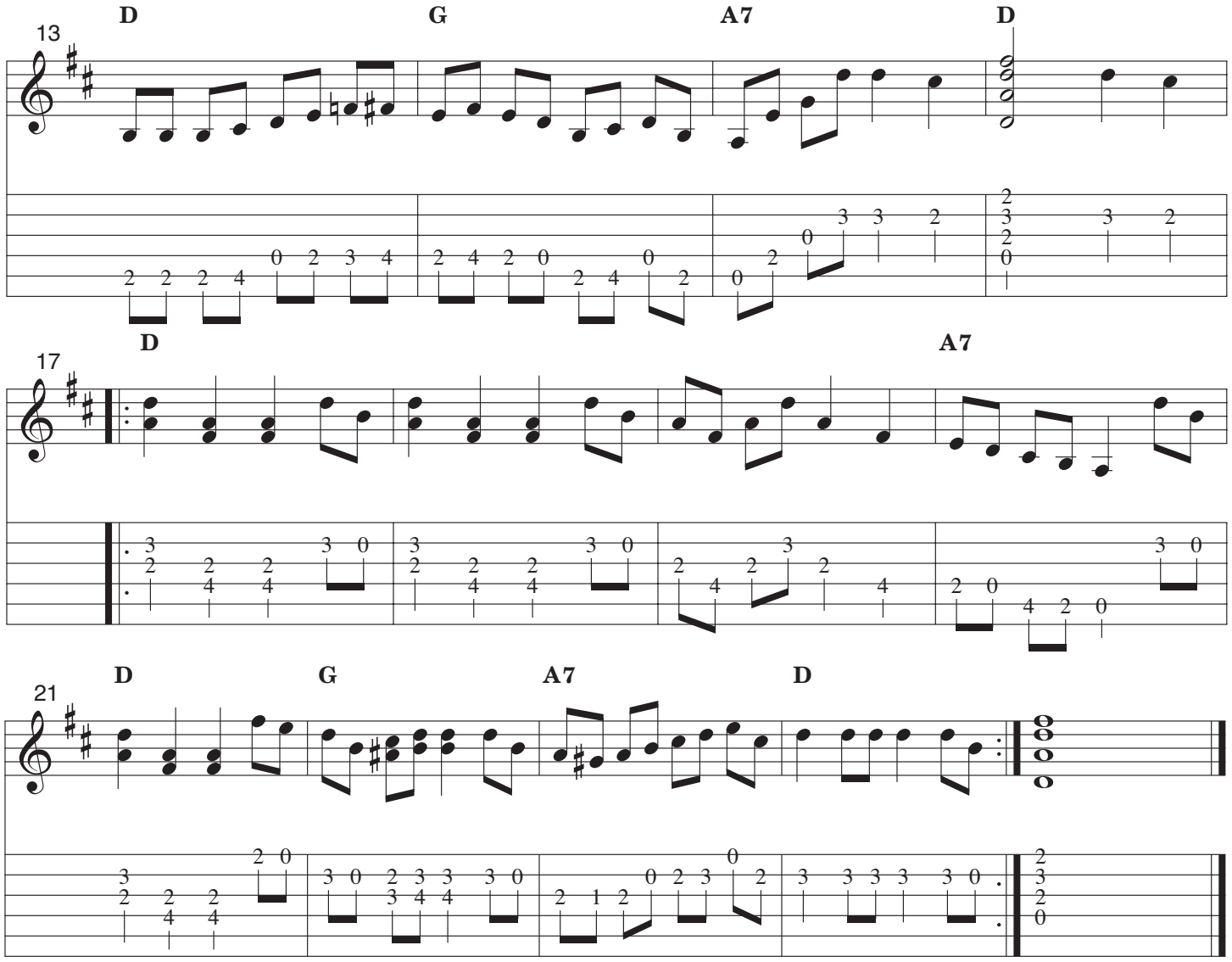
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Gospel Guitar

with Harold Streeter

Chord/Melody Style - Part Four: Transferring Melody lines to Higher Octaves

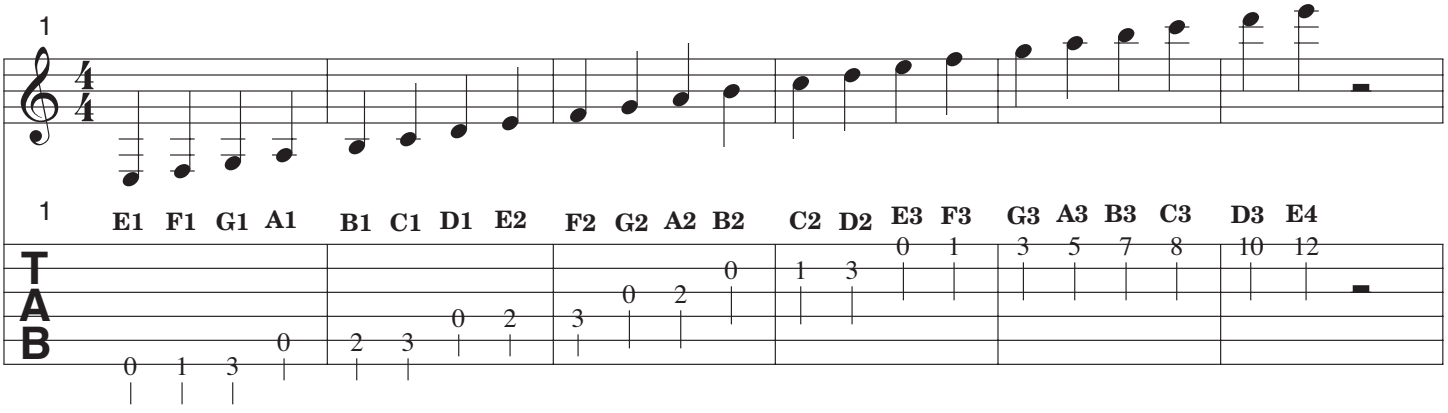
In this, part four of the continuing Chord/Melody style series, initial plans were to continue using "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" (the focal tune of the previous two columns) as a means of demonstrating further chord/melody style arranging concepts. In view of so many songs and so little time to play them in this life, however, it seemed best to switch gears and apply the topic of this column—transferring melodies to other octaves—to a different song.

As mentioned a couple of columns back, melody notes should ideally be confined to the first two, or at most, three strings, to insure that fully defined chords may be placed below the melody. One way to accomplish that is to transfer melody lines to higher octaves. It is of course always possible to raise melodies an octave or more by ear. If one isn't sufficiently familiar with alternative note positions all over the neck, however, the result may be melody notes placed in rather uneconomical locations on the neck, particularly in regard to songs which involve note placements in the mid to upper neck range.

For songs which do wind up higher on the neck, a little planning is in order. Because the range of the guitar neck in standard tuning up to the 12th fret is three octaves, we need a method of distinguishing the notes of one octave from those in another. That's the purpose of the neck diagram included here (on the next page). Consisting of all natural notes (no sharps or flats), notice that the octaves are distinguished by numbers following the letter names of the notes. The notes in the lowest octave, beginning with the 6th string open are: E1, F1, G1, A1, B1,C1, D1, and concludes with E2. The next octave begins with E2 and concludes with E3, and so on. If you,re not familiar with the neck's redundant nature (including the same note pitches in multiple locations) it might be a good idea to verify the fact for yourself. For example, play D2 on the 2nd string 3rd fret, followed by D2 on the 3rd string 7th fret, and D2 on the 4th string 12th fret, and you'll indeed hear they are the same note pitches.

To put that information to use, suppose you had a song, which after raising the melody an octave or two, wound up in the note range of E3 to E4. As those are the notes on the first string, I think you'll agree that it doesn't make much logistical sense to run up and down the 1st string to play the melody. As there's only one location for E4 (the 1st string 12th fret), it would make a lot of sense, however, to place the other notes in closer proximity to E4, such as playing E3 on the 3rd string 9th fret, G3 on either the 2nd string 8th fret or 3rd string 12th fret, and so on.

Also included here is a chart of sorts showing how the notes in all three octaves look on the standard notation staff (see below). Notice that the notes are labeled in the same manner as on the neck, beginning with E1 (the 6th string open) and ending with E4 (the 1st string 12th fret). For future songs requiring note transfers to other octaves, both the neck diagram and note chart might come in handy for keeping melody notes in close proximity.

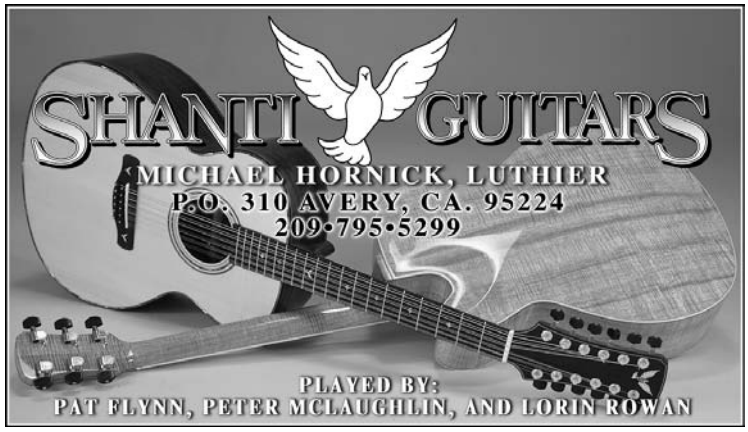


Faith of Our Fathers

All that being said, there are many songs which are "non-issues" so to speak, for which the neck diagram and note chart are not required for plotting note placements. "Faith of Our Fathers" is such a song. The first half of the tab in measures 1 through 24, is of the basic melody as it appears in many hymnals. With the melody confined to the 4th and 5th strings, it's impossible to place chords under the notes. The solution is to raise the melody an octave, as shown in measures 25 through 48. Notice that even after the transfer, the melody is still confined to the first three frets, and that just using the string/fret locations shown in the tab will suffice.

Placing chords under the raised melody is now an easy task, but due to lack of space, it's one that must be deferred to a later column. For now, a suggestion is to compare the melody in the lower octave to that in the higher octave through the use of the neck diagram and note chart, to see for yourself how easy such note transfers really are. Also, you won't find "Faith of Our Fathers" on the CD for this issue. It's such a simple melody that a demonstration really isn't justified.

The next issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* (Nov/Dec) is the Christmas issue, and in the spirit of the season, this column will feature a chord/melody style arrangement of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." In the Jan/Feb issue we'll be back to adding chords to "Faith of Our Fathers," and that version will be included on the CD for that issue.



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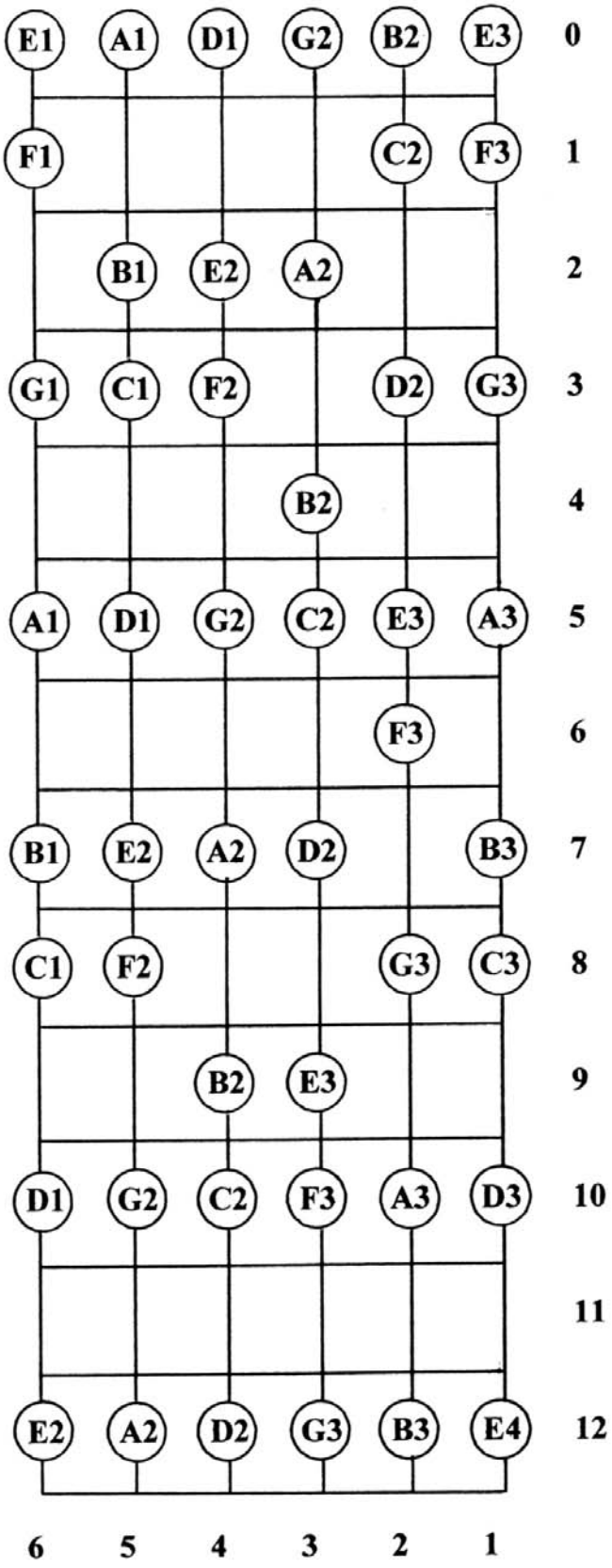
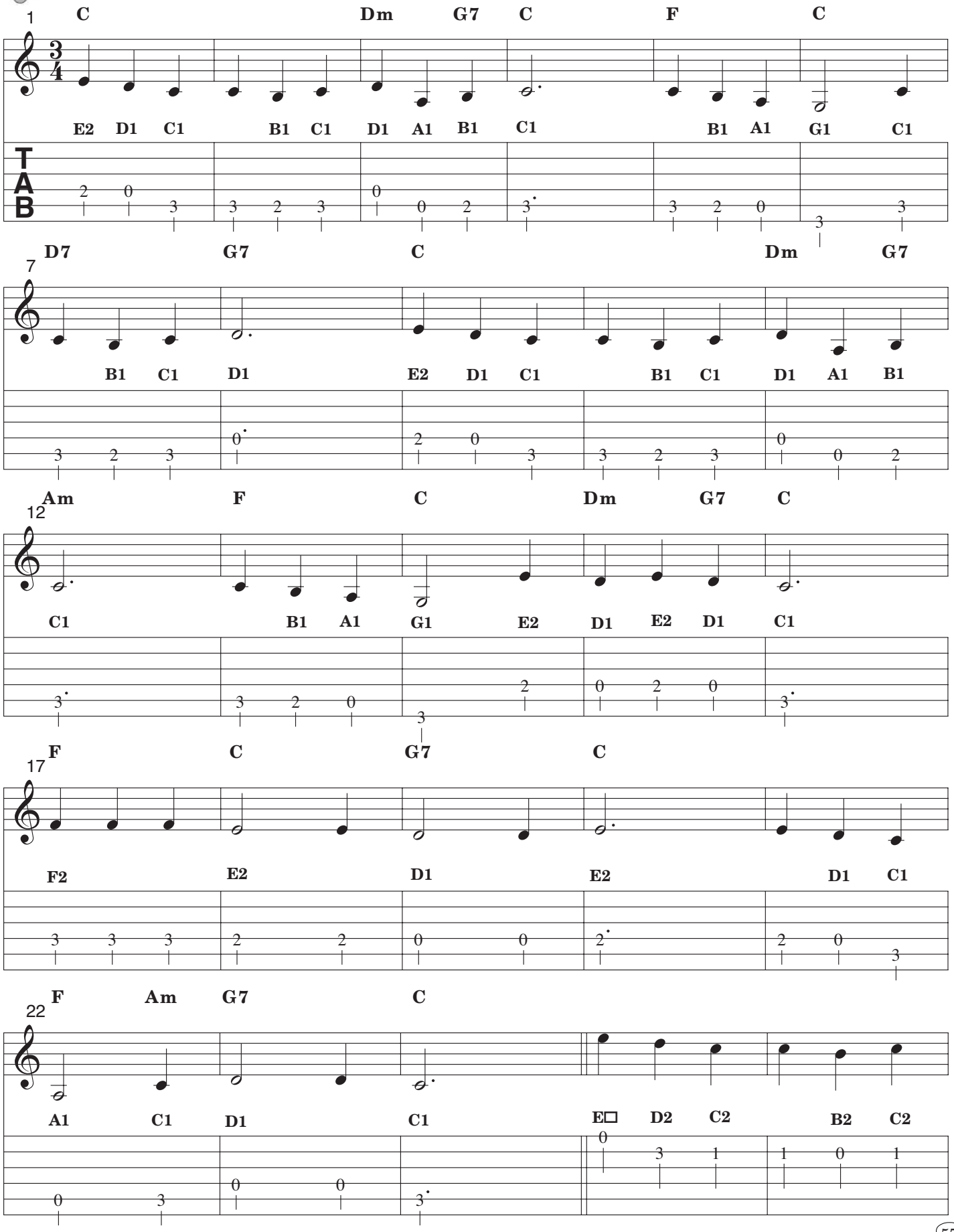
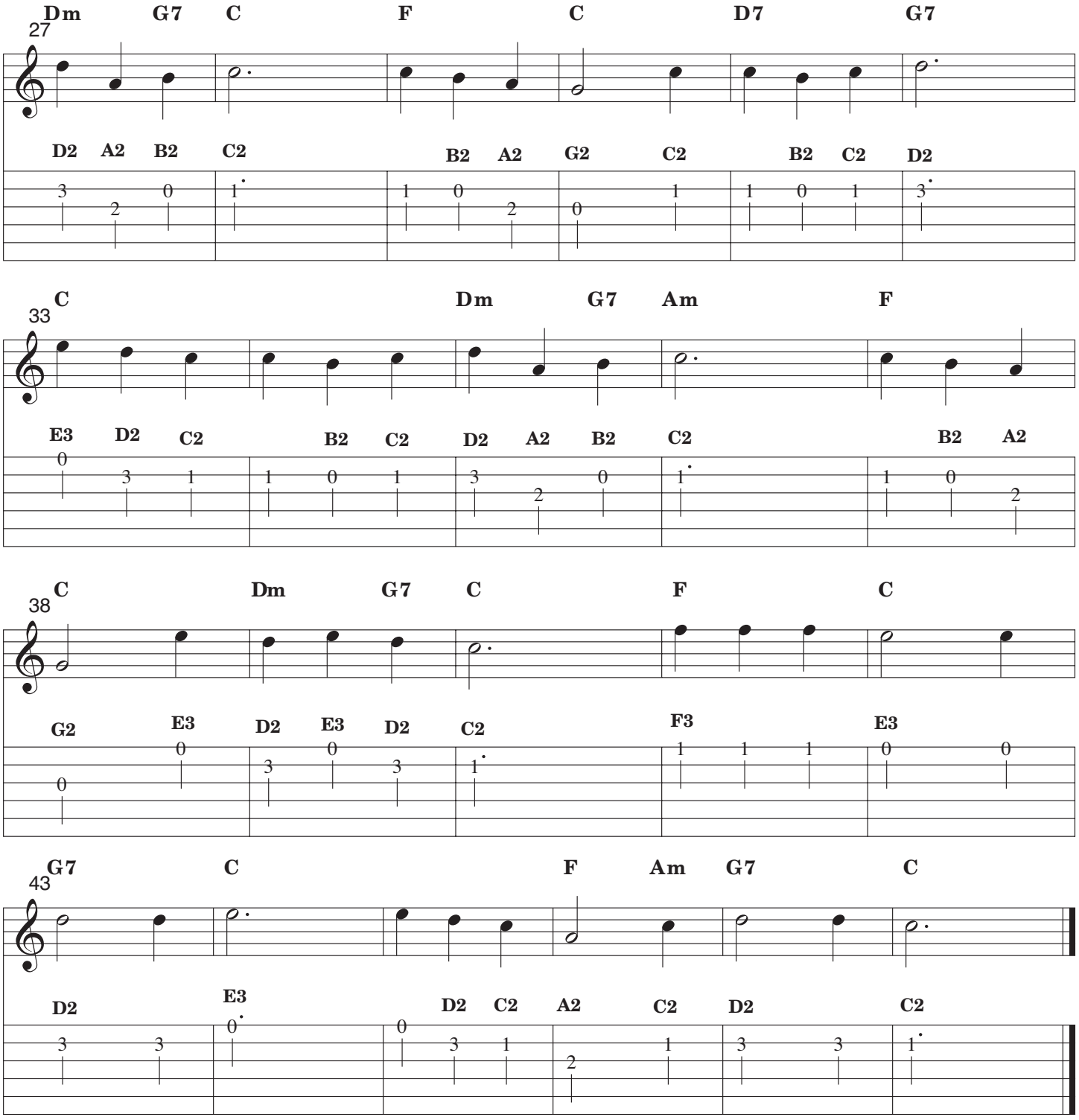
Octave Designations of Natural Notes on Guitar Neck in Standard Tuning

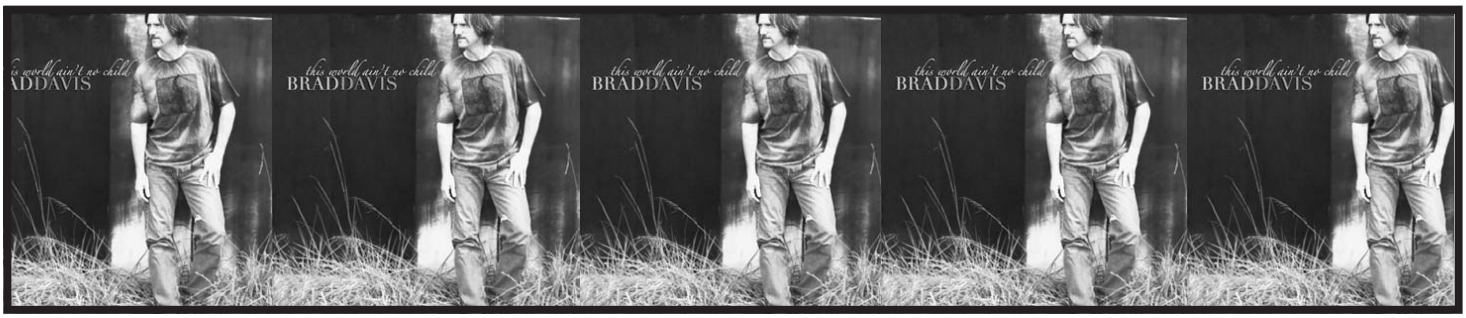


Audio CD
Tracks 25 & 26

Faith of Our Fathers

Arranged by Harold Streeter

1
C Dm G7 C F C
E2 D1 C1 B1 C1 D1 A1 B1 C1 B1 A1 G1 C1
TAB
D7 G7 C Dm G7
7
B1 C1 D1 E2 D1 C1 B1 C1 D1 A1 B1
Am F C Dm G7 C
12
C1 B1 A1 G1 E2 D1 E2 D1 C1
F C G7 C
17
F2 E2 D1 E2 D1 C1
F Am G7 C
22
A1 C1 D1 C1 E□ D2 C2 B2 C2

Faith of Our Fathers (con't)

Dm G7 C F C D7 G7
27
D2 A2 B2 C2 B2 A2 G2 C2 B2 C2 D2
C Dm G7 Am F
33
E3 D2 C2 B2 C2 D2 A2 B2 C2 B2 A2
C Dm G7 C F C
38
G2 E3 D2 E3 D2 C2 F3 E3
G7 C F Am G7 C
43
D2 E3 D2 C2 A2 C2 D2 C2



Flatpicking Guitar Magazine, D'Addario Strings, and Planet Waves announce the 1st

Flatpick Duo Contest

Why Are We Doing This?

The answer is simple. We want to help encourage you to get together with other people and pick! Our hope is that by providing you with something to motivate you and a picking partner to get together and work up a tune or two, practice your lead and rhythm parts, work hard to produce tasteful and interesting arrangements, and execute those arrangement together under the microscope of the studio microphone, you will have a great deal of fun, you will experience the joy of making music with another person, and in the process you will become a better guitar player! Even if you don't think that you have a chance of winning, participate anyway. It is all about having fun with it!

The Rules:

1) You and a partner get together and record a tune (instrumental). You can cover a traditional (public domain) tune, a more contemporary tune written by someone else, or you can record an original tune. You and your partner can swap full leads, swap partial solos, play harmony parts, or all of the above. The only condition here is that you both have to play lead and you both have to play accompaniment equally. You also both have to play an acoustic steel string guitar with a flatpick and the only instrumentation on the tune should be two guitars. Any style or genere of music that is covered in this magazine will be accepted.
2) Send a CD with your tune to the *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* office (see the table of contents page for this address) by October 30th, 2005. Make the package "Flatpick Duo Contest." You can submit as many tunes as you would like with the same, or different, partners. However, each tune must be on a separate disc.
3) A panel of Flatpicking Guitar Magazine columnists will judge the tunes for arrangement and execution (both lead and accompaniment) by both players. They will be looking for cleanly exectued, tastefully arranged material. They will also judge how well the two players compliment each other.
4) Questions? Email: dan@flatpick.com

The Prizes:

First Place: The first place duo will each win 50 sets of EXP strings from D'Addario; a brown leather strap, ergo prowinder, guitar humidifier and hunidity control sensor from Planet Waves; a two year subscription to *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine,* and a $100 gift certificate from Flatpicking Mercantile. The duo and their winning tune will also be featured in the January/February 2006 issue of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*.
Second Place: The second place duo will each win 25 sets of EXP strings from D'Addario; a brown leather strap and ergo prowinder from Planet Waves; a two your subscription to *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* and a $75 gift certificate from Flatpicking Mercantile.
Third Place: The third place duo will each win 10 sets of EXP strings from D'Addario; an ergo prowinder, from Planet Waves; and a one year subscription to *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* and a $50 gift certificate from Flatpicking Mercantile.

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"Song for Marcel"

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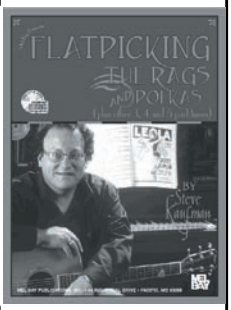

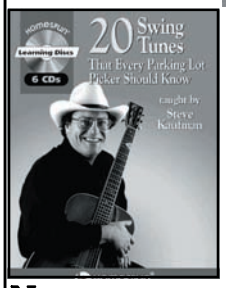

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Drop D Tuning

Song for Marcel

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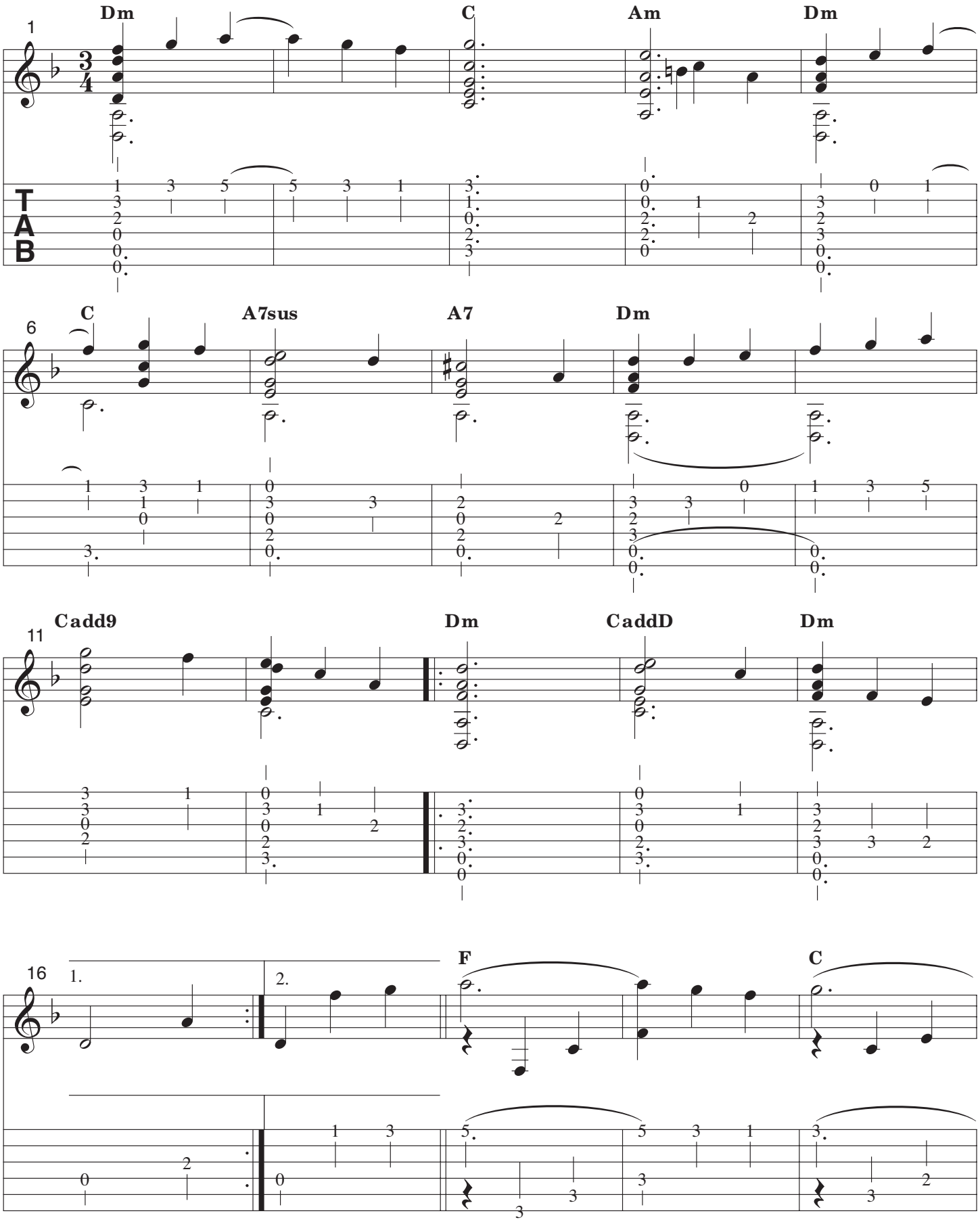
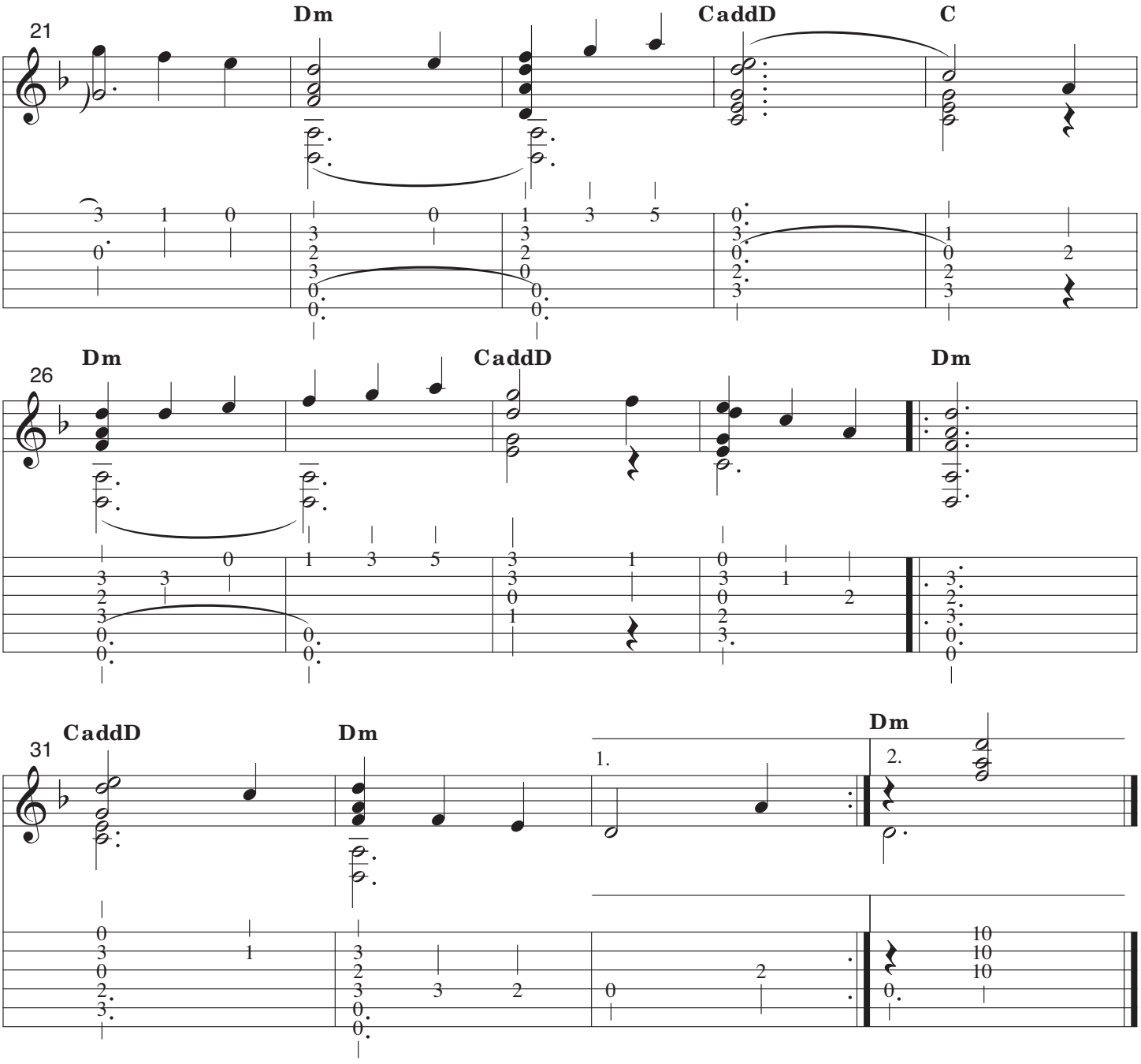

Song for Marcel (con't)

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PICKIN' ON FIDDLE TUNES

by Adam Granger

More Royce Campbell

Hello pickers on both sides of the moon. I got such positive response from my recent column on Royce Campbell that I decided to offer you another of his tunes, *Rolling Your Own*. As a bonus for you *FGM* CD purchasers, I unearthed a live recording of Royce picking this tune and have included it on the *FGM* CD. The recording was made by me on a little Sony handheld cassette recorder at a guitar workshop that Royce, myself, Dick Nunneley, Dudley Murphy and a young John Pollard conducted at a music store called the Picking Parlor in Norman, Oklahoma in June of 1974. It ain't album quality, but it's intelligible, and I consider it a legitimate historic flatpick recording.

First a brief recap: Royce was a guitar picker from Strang, Oklahoma, who lived all of his life in the general vicinity of Tulsa. He recorded one album, *Indian Summer*, with his wife Pat in the late sixties, and two albums with his band, The Natural Grass, in the early seventies. He reinterpreted others' tunes, composed tunes himself, and put to guitar tunes that Pat heard in her head and hummed to him. He was a wonderful picker and a true gentleman. He died about twenty years ago.

READING *EASYTAB*

Easytab is like conventional tablature, except that timing notation has been streamlined and simplified. Since fiddle tunes are comprised mainly of eighth notes, *Easytab* uses the eighth note as its basic unit. An eighth rest is indicated by a dot. Therefore, a note with a dot after it is a quarter note, and a note with three dots after it is a half note. There are a total of eight notes and rests per measure.

FOR BEGINNERS

Pick with an alternating style: down-up-down-up-down-up etc. The first note of each measure should be a downstroke, the last an upstroke. **Include rests** in this alternating pattern. This keeps you "in sync", playing downstrokes on the beats, so that, no matter what the configuration of notes and rests in an eight-unit measure, the right hand plays them down-up-down-up-down-up-down-up.

The first thing we notice about this tune is that it seems awfully long, clocking in at a whopping sixty-four measures. Well, it is long, but let's not have a conniption here; note that there are no repeats, so this is actually just a double-length (64-bar) tune. The next thing we notice is that the second part has lots of double stops. These are third-interval double stops, of the sort that Hank Snow loved. Hank Snow was one of Royce's key influences, and thus the connection is made. These may look hairy, but they are not, in fact, difficult. A sanguine scrutiny will reveal that all of these beasties are either one or two frets apart. If you play the one-fret double stops with your first and second finger and the two-fret ones with your first and third fingers, you'll come out sounding like a rose. Another thing to notice in this piece is the abundance of rests, both as single rests creating quarter notes and in long strings. This is less uncommon in guitar tunes than in fiddle tunes. I'm not sure why this is; maybe it's the strong tradition of fiddle tunes being used as dance music, and the resultant need for the tune to be unrelenting.

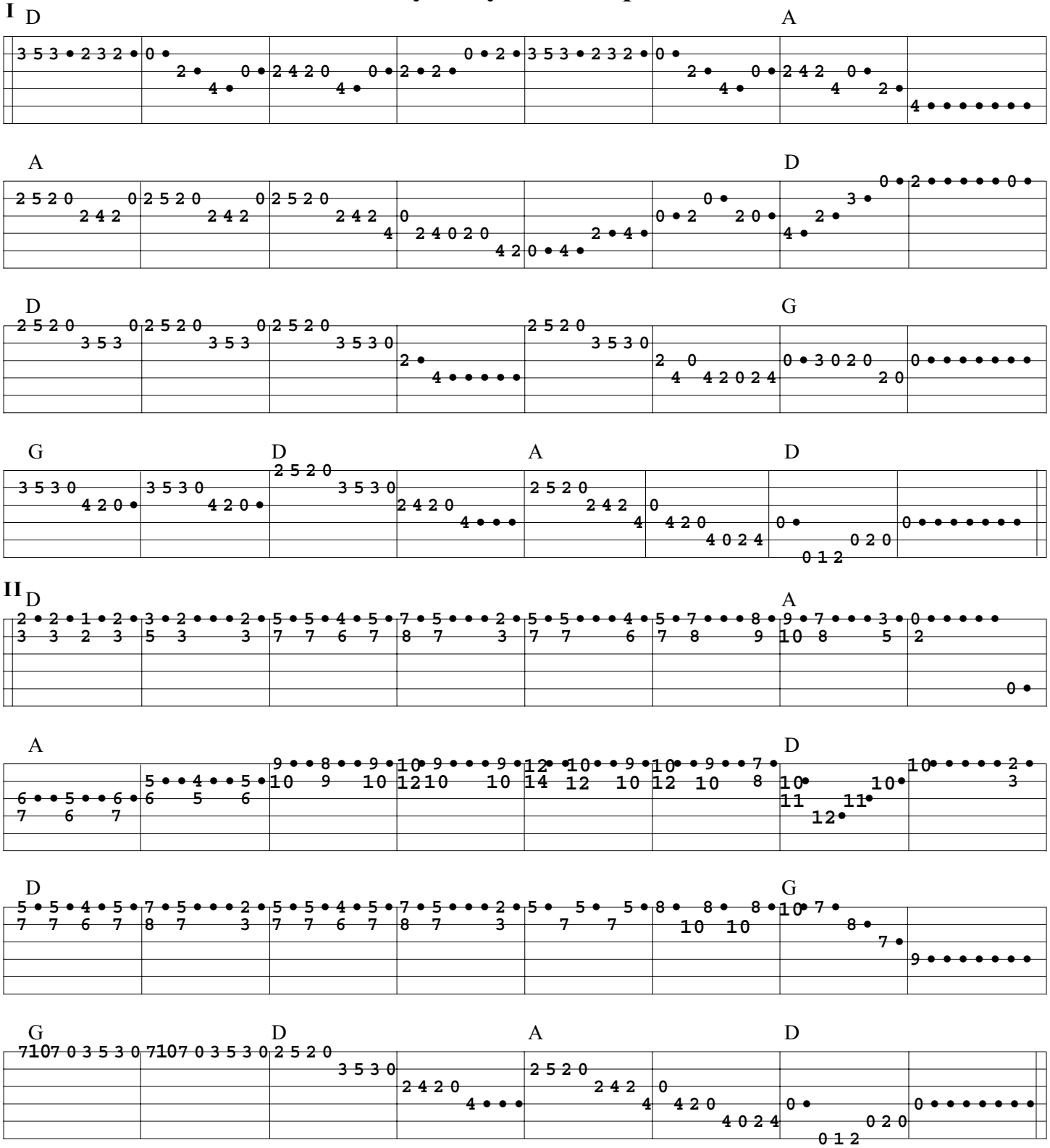
All right, so the standard rules of flatpicking in sync apply here, which means perforce that you're going to end up picking a lot of downstrokes.

Astute listeners will note differences in the way Royce picks this and the way I present it here. For example, Royce goes higher in the fifteenth and sixteenth measures than I have written (although he plays those measures as I have written them on his second time through the tune), and the second parts are much more gonzo on the *FGM* CD recording than I have presented them, with extra beats and an abundance double-stop improvisation (Rhythm players: note that when Royce adds the extra beats in the second part, Pat simply waits on a D chord for him to get done). Also, Royce, in his spoken introduction, expresses uncertainty as to this tune's provenance, citing Hank Snow (which is appropriate enough: it's definitely Hank Snow-ish, and we've already established that Snow was a major influence on Campbell) and surmising that the tune is called *Caribbean*.

My version is taken from my memory of his recording of this tune on the first Natural Grass album, so the folk process is heavily infused through this piece. Pick and choose among the variants and come up with your own version. All right, have at it.

ROLLING YOUR OWN by Royce Campbell

KEY: D



There you have it, folks. Another taste of Royce Campbell. Hope you enjoy this tune, and that it represents a breath of fresh air in your repertory of fiddle tunes, bluegrass standards (and not-so-standards). Beatles covers, Def Leppard interpretations and Blue Cheer tribute numbers. See you next time.

Adam has just finished employment as a musical extra in Garrison Keillor's movie A Prairie Home Companion. *The film was written by Keillor, directed by Robert Altman and stars Lily Tomlin, Meryl Streep, Kevin Kline, Virginia Madsen, Tommy Lee Jones, Woody Harrelson, Maya Rudolph and John C Reilly. Keillor asked Altman to include a dozen or so old vets to give the movie a bit of verisimilitude. They are: yours truly, Peter Ostroushko, Butch Thompson, Bill Hinkley, Judy Larsen, Dick Rees, Bob Douglas, Dan Newton, Becky Schlegel, John Pankake and Spider John Koerner. We're seen generally milling around on- and backstage, sometimes with instruments and sometimes not.*

John McGann's Eclectic Acoustic

Crosspicking and "Nine Pound Hammer"

John McGann (www.johnmcgann.com) is now an Associate Professor at Berklee College of Music, and among other duties, is leading a Bluegrass Guitar Lab, Django Lab, and Celtic Music Ensemble. He is actively touring and recording with the Wayfaring Strangers, Rust Farm, the Boston Edge, and others. His recently released DVD Rhythm Tune Up is receiving great accolades. You can check out his custom transcription service, in which you can have any music of your choice notated, at the above web address. The web site also offers lots of great free technique tips for flatpickers.

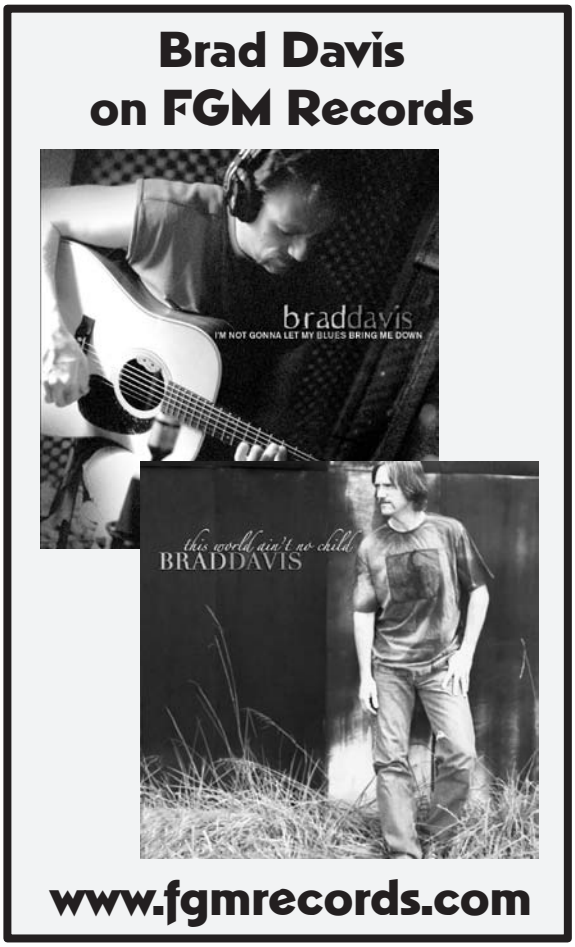
Crosspicking Rolls & "Nine Pound Hammer"

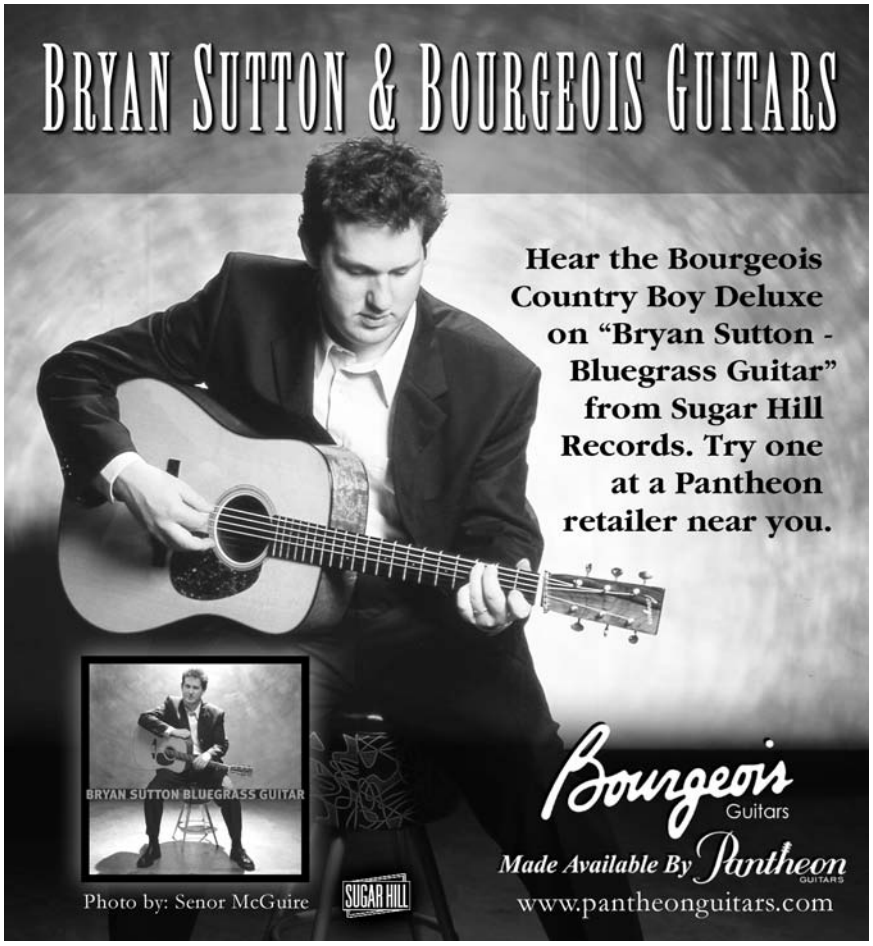
Crosspicking—as opposed to alternate (down/up/down/up) picking—allows for a very different rhythmic emphasis than you would get with alternate picking. The forward roll shows DDUDDUDD. Alternate picking would be DUDUDUDU. Play the phrase both ways, and notice how the natural grouping of notes 3+3+2 is emphasized with the downstroke on the 4th note (the "and" of beat 2). The reverse roll organizes the notes by skipping a string on the 2nd attack, picking DUUDUUDU.

Getting comfortable with these two patterns will allow you to apply them to various situations, including going in and out of standard alternate picking lines.

We can apply the crosspicking rolls to flesh out a simple melody. "Nine Pound Hammer" is a good tune to practice the rolls on. You can hear that I have woven the melody notes into the rolls, the other notes surrounding the melody notes are mostly chord tones. Also note the use of the open G string, which keeps it all ringing together.

You can hear crosspicking across the spectrum of bluegrass guitar, from Doc and Clarence through Tony, Bryan, Scott and onward. Experiment with the rolls to suit your own ears!

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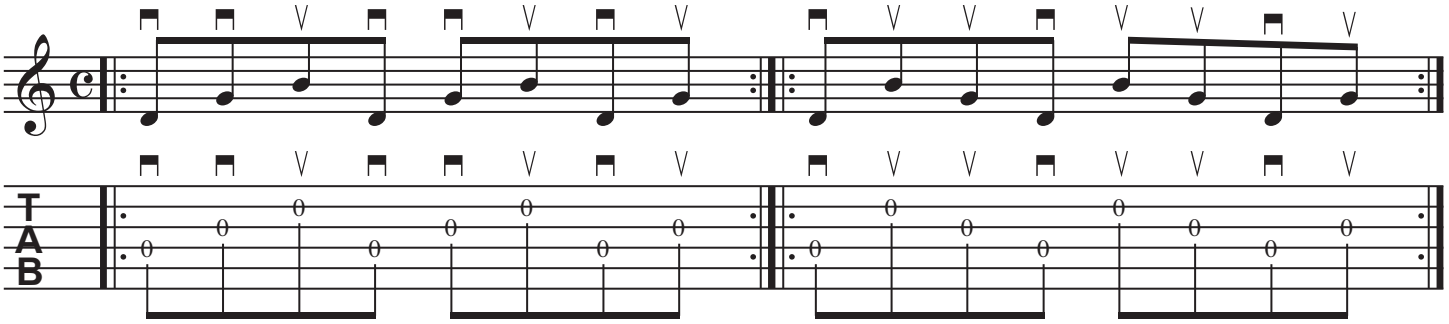
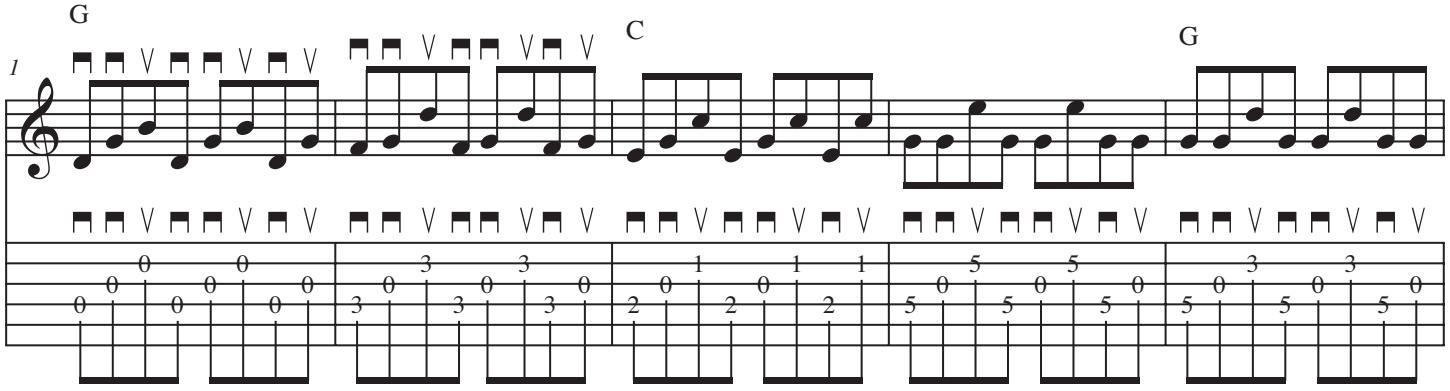
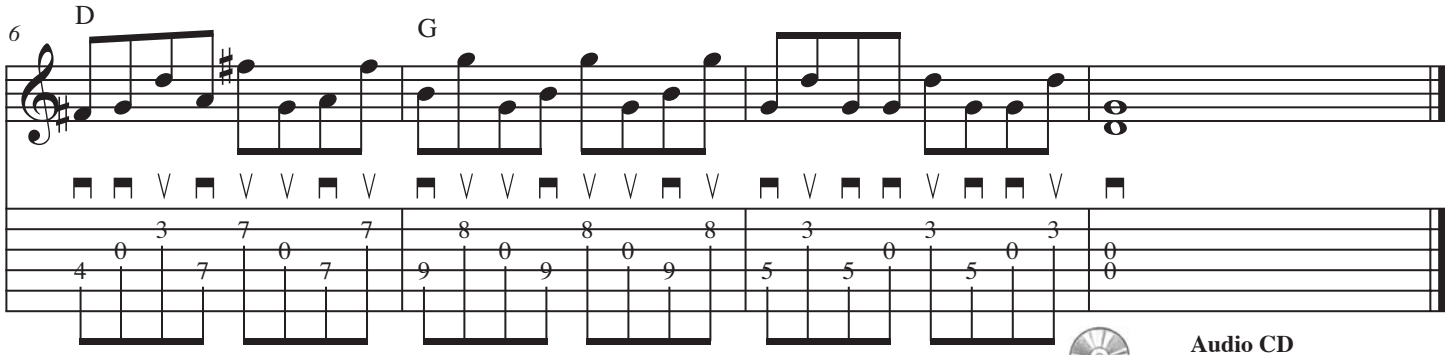
Tracks 48-50

Forward Roll

Reverse Roll

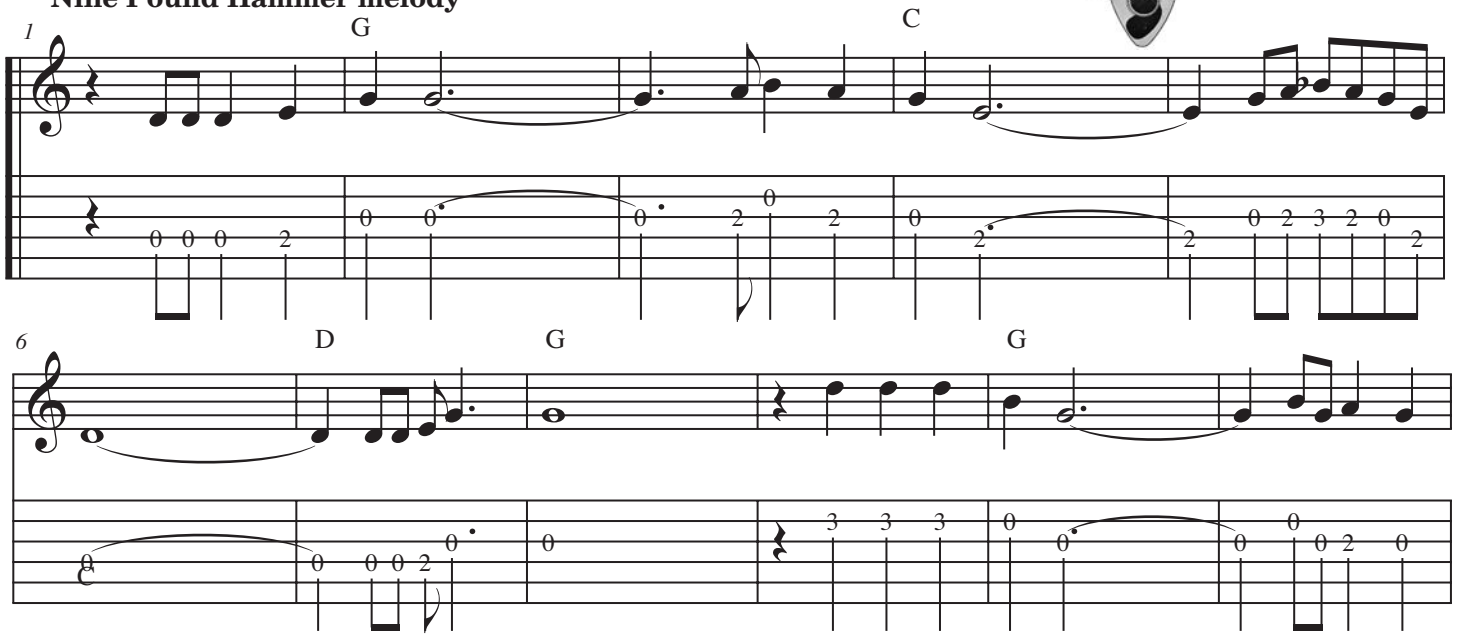
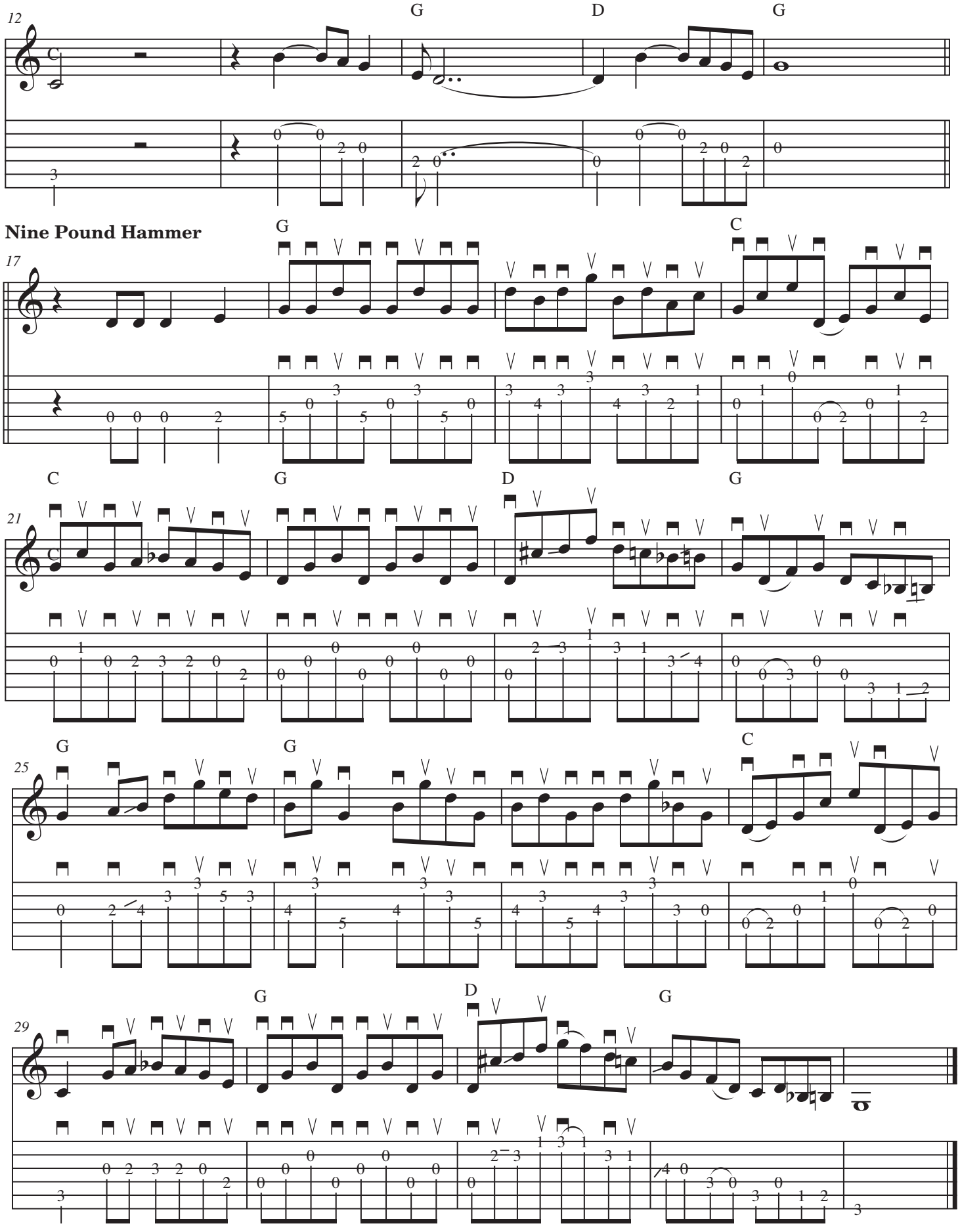






Audio CD
Tracks 51-53

Nine Pound Hammer melody



12
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G
Nine Pound Hammer
17
G
C
21
C
G
D
G
25
G
G
C
29
G
D
G

The Solo Flatpicker

by Dan Crary

Audio CD
Tracks 54-58

Tunes and Variations, Continued

Actually, it's not just more tunes and variations, it's really about becoming a player, not just a struggler. I've ranted before, and I'll probably do it again sometime, but we need to figure out how to really get somewhere, make our guitar information add up, not just stack up.

So today, here's another exercise in learning a tune by listening, paying attention to the structure of the thing, humming or whistling it, then working out a simple guitar version, then polishing the simple version, and lastly, after you have memorized and polished the simple version, making your own arrangement by substituting some variations that you thought of yourself. Today's tune is "Turkey in the Straw."

It all sounds obvious, like oh yeah, that method is what we're all doing, only for many of us it's a new concept. But it's an important one, and if you start doing this, you're going to find that the stuff you learn this way stays with you. You don't actually have to memorize a guitar part, because you memorized the tune first, so when you look for and find the basic guitar part, you'll remember it much more easily because it's already familiar before you start playing.

So as you listen to my track on the CD, I take you briefly through the steps, and we add to the previous column's beginning of a list of variations ("Note on top" and "high drone") with a couple of new types of variations that will work in any tune, including this column's "Turkey in the Straw." The new variations are "ArpSub" (substituting an arpeggio for a note or two of the melody) and "uphill slide" (it's…well… well, check it on the CD).

Now here's one additional trick for this tune: after you get the polished version in open "G," try playing it in a different position on the guitar, but still in the key of G. If you capo to the 5th fret and play in the "dropped D" shape (just like the D chord, but with the 6th string one octave lower than the 4th), it's still in "G" but sounds very different, very pretty, even powerful, especially when you play chords there over a fiddle or banjo. You can hear this done on a CD called *Chambergrass* available from Sugar Hill records or my website at www.DanCrary.com. We killed 'em at Lincoln Center in 1981 with this version, and I'm sure it was because they loved the guitar capoed to the 5th fret! OK, maybe the fiddle and banjo had a little to do with it as well.

But to make a serious point: because you will already know the tune, learning it in a second position will be a lot easier than starting from scratch with a complicated and incomprehensible TAB, and sometimes, just sometimes the change creates a whole new sound that's beautiful, like when Earl capoed to the seventh fret and he and Lester made guitar history as they played "Jimmie Brown The Newsboy," still one of the greatest guitar cuts ever recorded.

Well, it got dark out here on this rock at the edge of the world. The lights of the little town twinkle in the waves off South Point, the night wind has died down to a whisper and the melancholy of nightfall on the ocean makes me want to re-read "Dover Beach." With apologies to Matthew Arnold: Ah, Love, let us be true to…our guitar music. Cheers, You pickers and grinners.

And wherever you are tonight, Laree, sweet dreams….

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New Release Highlight
Wayne Taylor: Buffalo Shoals

by Dan Miller

Wayne Taylor is one of those rare guitar players in bluegrass music who brings to each performance a "triple threat" talent. Wayne is a strong singer, gifted songwriter, and solid lead guitar player. I've seen Wayne perform with the US Navy's bluegrass band, Country Current, a few times over the past two years and I am always impressed with the talent of this band and the material that they perform—much of which was written by Wayne. Although each member of the band is extremely talented, it is Wayne's lead vocals, solid rhythm guitar, and strong songwriting abilities that make this band truly exceptional. He is not only their leader and director; he is the glue that binds them together.

This past spring at the Gettysburg Bluegrass Festival the band captivated the audience with their execution of great bluegrass music and their ability to elicit a strong sense of national pride. During one portion of the show the band played through a medley of theme songs from each of the military service's branches. Beforehand Wayne had asked members and veterans from each service to stand when their service's theme was played. Men and women of all ages proudly stood, while other audience members applauded them, as the band moved through the theme songs of each service branch. You could actually feel an electric current of national pride moving through the audience. After the medley was complete Wayne stepped up to the microphone and launched into a strong and moving rendition of "God Bless the USA." There was not a dry eye in the crowd. After the band finished the tune, to a tremendous standing ovation, I not only understood why the US Navy funds its own bluegrass band, I also clearly knew why they selected Master Chief Musician Wayne C. Taylor as the man to lead them.

A native of Maiden, North Carolina, Wayne became interested in learning how to play the guitar at age nine after hearing a band perform at his father's American Legion club. He said, "The sound of the guitar really interested me." Wayne's father bought him an acoustic guitar and he began learning how to play chords from local

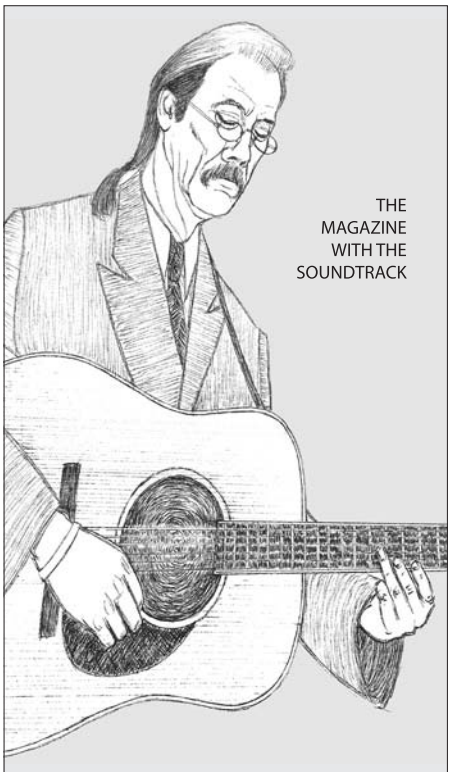
players and guitar books. He remembers first learning the G, G7, C, and D chords and the progression to "Rockin' Guitar."

Wayne's older brother David Taylor was the bass player in a band that performed music from early 1960's pop bands, like the Beatles and Beach Boys, for local dances. After Wayne had been studying the guitar for a couple of years, he was asked to join the band. He said, "When I was in sixth or seventh grade I also figured out that I could sing." From 1963 through 1965, Wayne played electric rhythm guitar and sang background vocals for his brother's band, The Initials. During his high school years, Wayne continued to perform in rock bands as a rhythm guitar player and vocalist. The repertoire evolved along with the changing trends in rock and roll and thus Wayne's interests later turned to late sixties groups like Cream and The Jimi Hendrix Experience.

Although Wayne grew up in the heart of bluegrass country, he did not become interested in playing bluegrass himself until after he graduated from high school. Wayne recalls, "A friend of mine, David Parker, was into bluegrass and he took me to see Lester Flatt and Mac Wiseman play. I started getting interested in playing bluegrass with David and since he played the guitar I picked up the mandolin." A short time later they were joined by banjo player, Barry Myers and bass player, Aaron Steelmon and started a band called East Maiden Express. The group performed together in North Carolina for several years.

After performing bluegrass music in North Carolina, Colorado, and then back in North Carolina during the early seventies, and supplementing his income working in furniture factories and textile mills, Wayne decided to join the Navy. In 1974, he went off to boot camp at Great Lakes, Illinois and later to Treasure Island, near San Francisco. He was subsequently trained in aviation maintenance administration, and then was shipped off to serve on Midway Island in the North Pacific. Not one to let the Navy completely eclipse his music career, Wayne found a Fender stratocaster when he got to Midway and started a country band. He said, "We were able to get gigs playing at the Enlisted Man's Club, the NCO Club, and the Officer's Club."

A pick-up country band was not the only music Wayne found on Midway, he also met some members of the US Navy Band. The Navy maintains fourteen high quality bands and these bands are called on to perform at various ceremonial and military functions, but additionally they serve as "ambassadors of good will" both in the United States and abroad (for more information about the Navy Band, visit http://www.navyband.navy.mil/). Currently the Navy Band, based in Washington, DC, maintains a concert band, a ceremonial band, chamber groups, a jazz band (Commodores), a rock band (Cruisers) a choral group (Sea Chanters) and a bluegrass/country group (Country Current). While on Midway Island, Wayne made friends with some of the musicians in the Navy Band from Hawaii. They told him about the Navy's music program and music school. Thinking that getting paid by the Navy to play music would be a fun thing to do, Wayne made a tape at a radio station and submitted it up the chain of command. The powers that be felt that the tape was good enough to earn Wayne an audition in Hawaii. His audition went well enough to get him assigned to the Navy School of Music in Little Creek, Virginia. While at the school Wayne says he studied a variety of topics relating to music, including music theory, ear training, percussion, voice, guitar, and jazz band.



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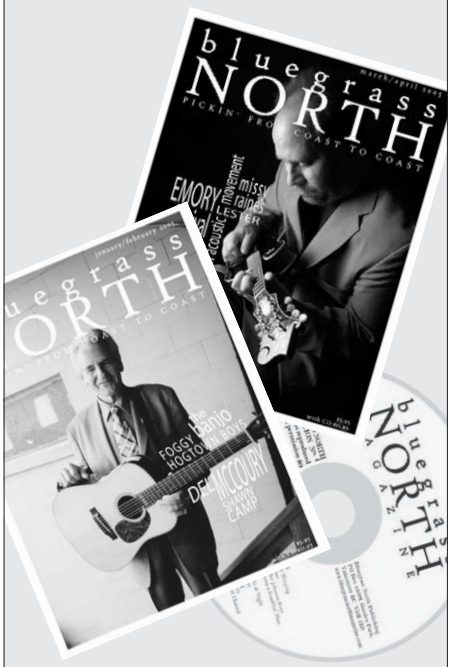

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Bill Emerson, Wayne Taylor, and Jimmy Martin

After he finished music school, Wayne was assigned to play in The Orient Express, a Navy rock band based in Yokosuka, Japan. He was the lead guitar player in the band and performed on a black Gibson Les Paul. Regarding the music the band performed, Wayne said, "We played everything from disco to bluegrass! I told the Navy that I wanted to have a banjo so we could play a few bluegrass tunes and they sent me a Gibson Mastertone." Wayne performed with the band "all over Asia" from 1976 through 1978. In 1978 he decided to leave the Navy and return to school. He first attended San Joaquin Junior College in Stockton, California. He subsequently entered the University of the Pacific and earned a degree in music, with emphasis on music therapy. While he was in California, Wayne played acoustic guitar and sang as a solo act at The Hatch Cover restaurant/lounge. He performed a four-hour show, three nights a week, for four years.

After college, Wayne took a six-month internship in music therapy in his home state of North Carolina. After his internship was over, he discovered that there were not many job openings in the music therapy profession in that area of the country, so he created one. He accepted a job as a counselor at a minimum-security prison and developed a music therapy program for the inmates. The program consisted of a six-week class, of his design, which taught inmates how to form a group and play music together. In addition to teaching them how to play their instruments, Wayne also taught music theory as part of the course. The music program was part of the prison's Community Readiness Training Program. After holding the job at the prison for three years, Wayne worked as a Probation Parole officer for a year. During this time, he was also playing lead electric guitar in a dance band called the Midnight Flyers.

When Wayne decided to leave the Navy in 1978, the Navy tried their best to keep him in the service. They said, "What can we do to keep you here?" Wayne's request was that he be assigned to play in the Navy's bluegrass and country band Country Current with Bill Emerson. Unfortunately, the band did not have an opening at the time. By 1987, Wayne was "fed up with the probation job" so he called the Navy to see what they had available. As luck would have it, the lead singer for Country Current had just left the band and they were looking for a replacement. Wayne said, "They remembered me and asked that I send a tape. I sent them a tape with six songs on it. They just wanted my voice and guitar. A short time later I went up for a formal audition and I got the job."

Wayne entered the Navy once again in 1987 and has held the job as Country Current's guitar player and singer ever since. For the first seven years with the band he performed alongside the band's longtime leader, and bluegrass banjo legend, Bill Emerson. The band performs at festivals and gives public concerts all over the United States in order to "promote Navy awareness." In addition to the bluegrass band and country band, Wayne also plays in a Navy trio that performs at dinner shows for dignitaries. He has played for Presidents Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush. When

asked which president he thought was the biggest bluegrass fan, Wayne said that it was the elder George Bush, who on one occasion took the band with him to China.

As part of Country Current, Wayne has also had the opportunity to perform on stage, and sing harmony, with Vince Gill, Larry Gatlin, and Lee Greenwood. The band has also been featured on Nashville Now and on the Grand Ole Opry. When asked about the greatest highlight of his career with the band to date, Wayne said, "In 1995 I got to perform with Bill Monroe. I sang lead to 'Uncle Pen' and Bill sang harmony."

Although Wayne has had a very interesting, productive, and rewarding career as a guitar player, singer, and songwriter for the Navy band, he has also recorded, and recently released, a solo CD that he produced himself outside of his Navy job. On this new release, *Buffalo Shoals*, Wayne's singing and songwriting are prominently featured. Wayne said, "I recorded with Bill Emerson for Pinecastle Records back in the early 90s. That CD has ran it's course, but I still play some of those songs and I wanted to record them again on a new project. The guys in the Navy band and I also recorded a project on the side called *Dreaming of the Sea*. That CD is no longer in print." Wayne took songs that he wrote from the previous projects, added some new songs, and *Buffalo Shoals* came together.

Wayne's singing and songwriting talent would be enough to carry any recorded project on their own merit, however, for *Buffalo Shoals* he also called in some of his extremely talented friends to help him. In addition to Wayne's singing, songwriting, and guitar playing *Buffalo Shoals* includes Dennis Caplinger on banjo, John Moore on mandolin and guitar, Mike Auldridge on resonator guitar, Rickie Simpkins on fiddle, and Russell Moore and Ray Deaton on harmony vocals. When a singer and songwriter of Wayne's talent gets together with musicians of this caliber the project is bound to be a winner. *Buffalo Shoals* has been in my CD player for over a month now and I still listen to it every time I get in the car. It is great stuff!

If you are looking for a "flatpicking" CD, I'll need to tell you that *Buffalo Shoals* does not feature a lot of lead guitar work. Wayne plays lead on two tunes, and John Moore does a fantastic job ripping through some awesome solos on a couple of others, but you would not buy this CD if you are in search of a lot of hot guitar solos. This is primarily a good solid bluegrass CD…great singing (lead and harmony), great lyrics, and fantastic fiddle, Dobro, and banjo playing.

Wayne kicks off the CD with the title cut, "Buffalo Shoals." Along with being the title cut, Wayne said that this is the song that will be pushed on the radio. While this is a strong song, and one of my favorites on the CD, I am more taken with the second track. The second song, "Heart of Caroline," is the one that I play over and over. This is one of those hard driving bluegrass songs that gets your foot tapping and blood pumping. John Moore takes a great guitar solo on this one. (We have included this tune as a bonus track at the end of the audio companion CD that accompanies this issue). Both of the first two tunes on the CD have great melodies and catchy lyrics. They are the kind of songs that you find running through your mind all day long.

The third song, "The Ways of God" is an up tempo gospel tune. On cut four Wayne slows things down a bit and provides us with a beautiful love song "On This Rainy Day" (you can hear this one on the audio companion to this issue). We have tabbed out Wayne's chickin' pickin' solo on the following page.

The remainder of this CD's thirteen tunes continue with an exploration of love. We are treated to lyrics of love gone wrong ("Vengeance", "Every Time It Snows" and "Maggie Valley"), love of a place and time ("Appaloosa") the love of a good woman ("Do You Still Love Me", "Walking With The Angels" and "Rodybelle"), and a couple of good ole bluegrass death songs ("Rose Gold Wedding Band" and "Lover's Pine"). I found that the mix on this CD in terms of tempo, instrumentation, stylistic presentation, lyrical content and lyrical expression was excellent. The CD was cohesive, however, each song brought something new to the disc. This is a great bluegrass CD and I highly recommend it.

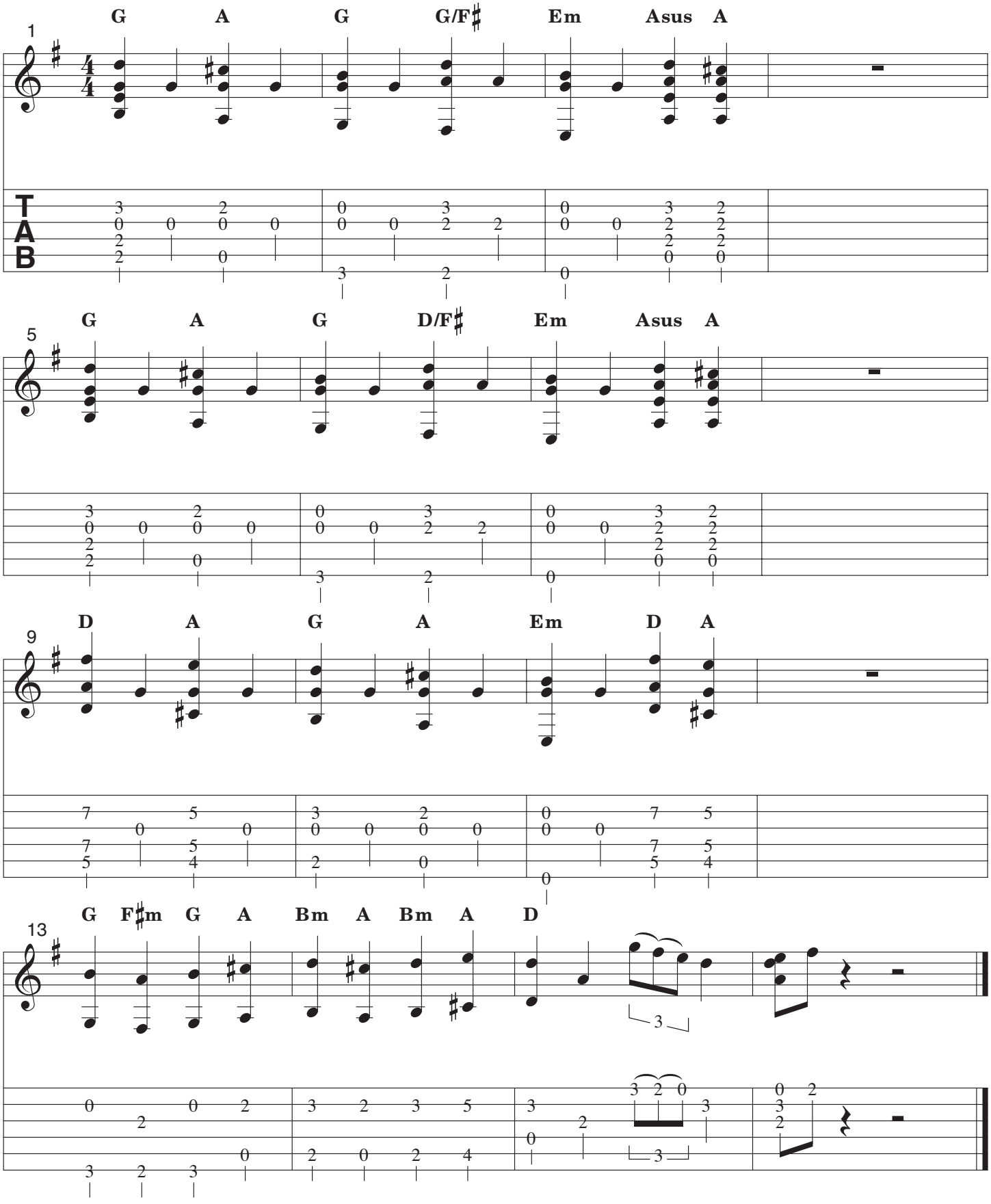
Wayne has recently "reupped" his Navy commitment until 2007. If he decides to retire after his enlistment ends he says that he will probably go back to North Carolina with his family, and start a new band. But, until then, you can catch him wherever Country Current is playing. If you would like to get a copy of *Buffalo Shoals*, visit www.waynectaylor.com.

On the following page we have provided a transcription of Wayne's guitar intro to the song "On This Rainy Day." Wayne uses the flatpick in combination with his fingers on this tune in a style known as chickin' pickin'. For those of you who have been following Brad Davis' column in the past few issues, this is an example of the technique that Brad has been explaining. You can see a short video clip of Brad demonstrating this technique by visiting www.flatpickteacher.com

Wayne Taylor on stage with Bill Monroe in Rosine, Kentucky, September, 1995

Audio CD
Track 59

On This Rainy Day

Arranged by Wayne Taylor
Transcribed by Brad Davis

Reviews

Without Maps or Charts
Hit & Run Bluegrass
Hit & Run Bluegrass, HRB-02

Reviewed by Chris Thiessen

For any band committed to recording, the debut album is a daunting project. It sets a benchmark, a promise, that subsequent projects must meet and (if the band is to continue evolving) exceed. The second project then falls under greater scrutiny: critics and fans alike now have a basis for comparison.

Without Maps or Charts, the second project from Hit & Run Bluegrass (H&RB), should leave critics and fans alike with no doubts. H&RB earned respect with their first CD (*Beauty Fades*); *Without Maps or Charts* clearly demonstrates that although beauty may fade, musical talent can—and in this case does—grow exponentially.

In their first CD, H&RB demonstrated a firm artistic grasp on their musical excellence they wanted to portray. A steady diet of club performances. festival appearances, and practices since that release has refined these musicians' intuitive musical knowledge about the delicate balance between too many and just enough notes. Listen carefully to both the collective work and the individual solos on the CD's opening cut "Any Day Woman" (the Paul Siebel tune Bonnie Raitt recorded several years back). Todd Livingston's opening Dobro riff leads logically into Aaron Youngberg's bedrock-solid banjo and John Frazier's definitive but unobtrusive mando-chop, and also plaintively anticipates Rebecca Hoggan's vocals and the song's general tone. After the first few bars, Erin Coats (on bass) and Hoggan (on guitar) flesh out the tone of the song, with Coats singing harmony on the choruses. But none of this is overdone or heavy-handed. The buoyant energy evident in their first CD is still very much present; H&RB has just learned how to control it so much better!

Solos occur after the second verse, and as each instrument comes to the mike their "less-is-more, focus-on-the-tune" musical philosophy takes center stage. We are not confounded with a blaze of notes from each musician, although these musicians leave no doubt they have that capability. Instead, each solo—banjo, guitar, Dobro—clearly reinterprets the core melody. (Frazier and Youngblood share another solo towards the end of the tune.) For guitarists (since this is *FGM*), Rebecca Hoggan maximizes the guitar's resonance. Her solos balance crisp single-note work with slides that recall a style reminiscent of the early Tony, yet provide a clearly and audibly tie back to the tune's melody. For further evidence, listen to "Wind Moans Under the Door" or "Highway of Regret."

And that's the hallmark of this H&RB CD: the legacy of instrumental excellence and enthusiasm from their first CD is now tempered with a focus on the tune. How much of this is due to the influence of Kenny and Amanda Smith (who co-produced the CD) is a moot point; that it has been accomplished in such a short time demonstrates once again that commitment to excellence this band has made to itself and its audiences.

But this CD is also has another rare quality: you can just put it in the player and enjoy the music without activating "music critic" mode. Erin Coat's ballad "I've Kissed You My Last Time" is just one of the eminently listenable songs (although Rebecca's guitar work, as well as John Frazier's mandolin supporting Erin's voice in this tune is wonderfully delicate). Throughout the CD, the vocal arrangements provided by John Frazier, Erin Coats, and Rebecca Hoggan continually echo the "focus-on-the-tune" emphasis.

We are also treated to several original tunes by John Frazier ("Home Is Where I'll Ever Be" and "Lockdown for Your Love") and Hoggan ("Why Does This Old Town Look Better Now"), as well as a sprinkling of contemporary tunes (like the aforementioned Paul Siebel/Bonnie Raitt tune) and some traditional tunes (such as "Single Girl" and "I Got the Keys to the Kingdom"). "I Got the Keys to the Kingdom" deserves, I believe, special mention. A vocal and instrumental tour-de-force, it emphasizes this band's remarkable ability to shift to the "traditional" mode when the music requires. To validate that, listen to the Stanley tune "Highway of Regret" that closes the CD. (And for fun, listen a couple of times to Rebecca's guitar solo. That should provide some late-fall/early-winter woodshedding!)

It's particularly significant that this second H&RB album is titled *Without Maps or Charts*. Notice that there's no corresponding tune on the CD with that name. Instead, the title refers to the musical commitment H&RB has made to its own musical evolution. They are now—like Monroe once was and like all serious bands eventually must—operating in a landscape that has few familiar landmarks. Without losing their enthusiasm for the craft or the music, Hit & Run Bluegrass has matured and actively engaged our trust to act as guides into the unknown. I look forward to our next foray together.

Song List: Any Day Woman; Flying in the Wind; I've Kissed You My Last Time; Wind Moans Under the Door; Home Is Where I'll Ever Be; Hardwood Floors; Got the Keys to the Kingdom; Lockdown for Your Love; Single Girl; Why Does This Old Town Look Better Now; Close the Bar; Highway of Regret

Kenny and Amanda Smith Band
Always Never Enough
REB- CD- 1811A
Rebel Records

Reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

Always Never Enough is Kenny and Amanda Smith's latest offering and it's obvious from the driving first cut that this band plays bluegrass music. You might think that with Kenny Smith in the band, I'd be raving about the guitar playing, but what caught my ear first was the crisp and clear mandolin playing of newest and youngest member Jason Robertson. After that, it's "the tall guy" Steve Huber. Tone! Who would've thought that a banjo could have such good tone….oh wait, the DVD is right there on my shelf "Killer Tone-Steve Huber". Well, the proof is in the pudding and Huber makes tasty pudding when it comes to banjo tone. Next up is the fantastic voice of Amanda Smith. I'll tell you what, Kenny—you caught a good one there! That gal can really sing.

And finally, what all you flatpickers have been waiting for—Kenny Smith, of the punchy D-18 tone himself. You'll get plenty of Kenny's playing here and it seems to stand out in the speakers better than some of his previous material. Not that the other stuff was bad or anything, but the guitar just seems a little bit more "forward" in the mix or something. I'm looking at a pre-release copy of the CD and don't have liner notes so I can't tell you which guitar—the Collings or the prewar D-18—Kenny's playing, but whichever it is, you got a good one there, too!

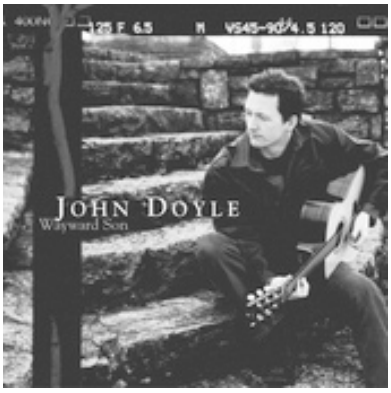
From the song titles, you can see that the Smith Band has given us a generous 42 minutes worth of songs. With the exception of "Going Across the Sea", these are all new titles to me. As such, it takes a couple of listens to get used to them. But, that's an easy task, given the listenability of the tunes, thanks in large to the virtuosity of the players (see 1st paragraph, above). There are a few slower songs, such as "Just Any Day Now", but the majority of them are mid to upper tempo.

There's great harmony singing throughout, of course. In fact, I would say that, good as the picking is, the singing is probably the highlight of this disc. The Smiths switch off on lead and harmony and do a couple of duets.

Always Never Enough is an excellent album and highly recommended for bluegrass fans. Even though we may miss the Smith version of the Lonesome River Band, I'd have to say that Kenny made a good move. We get to hear a lot more of Mrs. Smith, and they have assembled a crackerjack band with more traditional leanings than the LRB. I'm all for that combination.

Song List: Always Never Enough, Dig A Little Deep, A Thousand Mile Ago, Pacific Time, Going Across The Sea, Gulf Steam Dreaming, Just Any Day Now, When Her Smile Is Gone, Danbury Jail, Going By Again, Young Heart, Why You do What You Do, She's On My Mind, Our Last Goodbye

John Doyle
Wayward Son
Compass Records



Reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

John Doyle is, of course, the former guitar player for the band "Solas", stepping out on his own here with a solo album *Wayward Son*. Doyle is joined by a large cast of characters, including Alison Brown, Liz Carroll, Casey Driessen, Stuart Duncan, Seamus Egan, John McCusker, Tim O'Brien, John Williams and more. Having moved to North Carolina seems to have influenced Doyle's playing. In the reverse of O'Brien going to Ireland to visit his roots, Doyle seems to be picking up some Appalachian influence. It's not bluegrass, but I can definitely hear the hardwood forests and blueridge mountains on this album. Check out, for instance, Doyle's arrangement of "Little Sadie". We've all heard Doc and Tony and Dan do this song but Doyle sure 'nuff does it his way, turning it into a dark, mournful, swinging opus. It's a great arrangement. The "Gallant Poacher" is a similar dark tale of a poaching expedition gone wrong. Doyle does the lead singing on the CD and does a very good job of it, too. I very much like the fact that he gives us the lyrics to the tunes and I wish everyone would do that!

Being the rhythm master that he is, Doyle also gives us several fiddle tune medleys, done in a sparse arrangement where we can clearly hear the guitar interacting with the lead instrument. I like his style of playing—it's full and punchy and rhythmically very interesting. Us bluegrassers can definitely pick up some rhythm ideas by listening to Doyle. It

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brings to mind my friend John Beaver's comment upon hearing Robin Bullock "re-Irish-ify" the tune "Red Haired Boy" for me—Mr. Beaver said "Boy, we've ruined that song…". Listening to Doyle really emphasizes that fiddle tunes don't have to be fast and driving all the time to be interesting and musical. Nor is his rhythm a simple chunk-chunk, but is full of unexpected, yet appropriate, rhythmic twists.

Overall, I found *Wayward Son* to be a most fine album; very enjoyable, very well paced, with excellent tunes done with great taste. I'm going to be doing quite a bit more listening to it after this review is done. Highly recommended!

Song List: Gallant Poacher, Jack Dolan, Glad Eyes/The Journeyman/The Wayward Son [Jigs to Reel], Captain Glenn, Bitter the Parting, Old Bush/Expect the Unexpected Reels, Apprentice Boy, Tie the Bonnet/Monahan Twig/A Fair Wind/The Convenience Reel Reels, Month of January, Little Sadie, Eddie Kelly's/Reavy's Tribute to Coleman Reels, Cocks Are Crowing

Elliott Capos

by David Dugas

Many of my favorite musical memories have occurred in Winfield, Kansas, at the Walnut Valley Festival and of those memories one of my fondest is meeting, picking with, and becoming friends with capo builder extraordinaire Phill Elliott. If you're into guitar and banjo capos, you are bound to be familiar with the name Phill Elliott. His Elliott and McKinney-Elliott capos are known for their craftsmanship and precision-built quality.

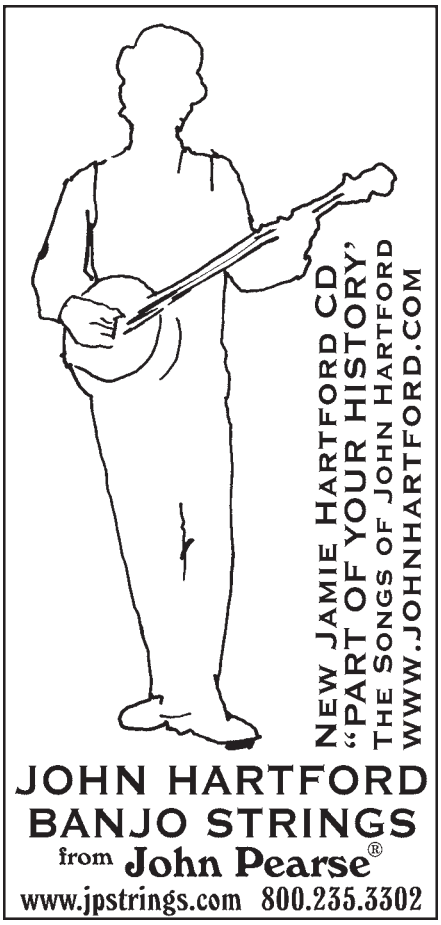
Phill started building capos in the '70's when longtime friend, Dick Langford came home from a festival with a little banjo capo that somebody had given him that was hand made. He showed Phill the capo and with Phill's machine shop background he made himself a "little capo." Phill says "I just had to make a little C-style banjo capo like the one Dick showed to me. I just kept trying to build a little bit better mousetrap and one thing led to another and I built a little capo."

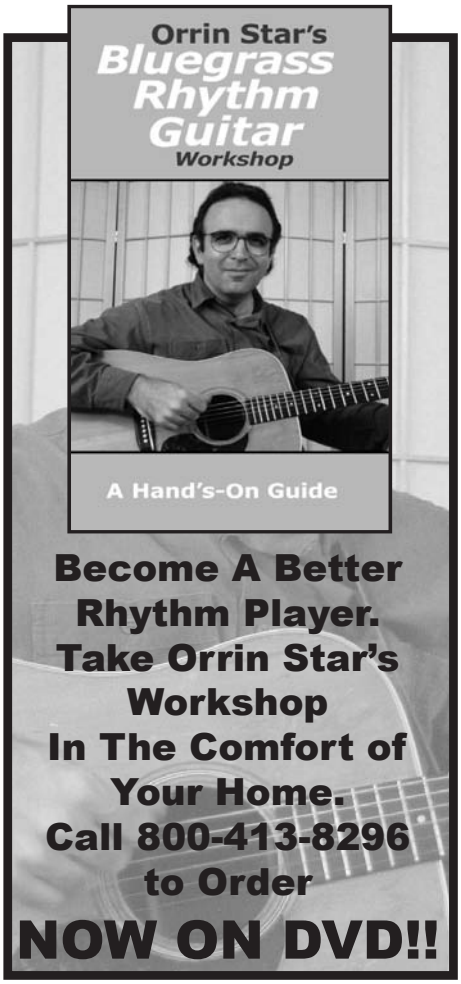
Phill initially built a Scruggs-Reuben style capo patterned after the capo Dick Langford brought home from the festival. Phill says "I think Earl Scruggs sold a Scruggs-style capo, which I've also heard it called a Scruggs-Reuben, but it was just a little C-style capo and you can still buy them. Actually, a lot of people, including Saga still make a C-style capo."

When asked about the construction quality of his first capo Phill laughed and said "I don't know if everyone else is this way, but if I see something someone else has done, that I like, I'll use it a little while then I'll try to think of an improvement. Things just kind of evolve and that's what has happened with my capos. I guess it's kind of like playing music; if you admire and respect the music you hear and find it listenable and exciting you expand it a little bit and that's basically what I've done. I respect what other folks have done that was functional and respect their effort and their design. I use a few of their ideas and expand my own. It has been a continual improvement process."

"My first influence with the latching capo or the D-style capo was the brass Yamaha capo. I'm told Yamaha imported them and then later on Saga took it over and it became the Golden Gate capo. I liked the latching style or D-style capo the best. It was really a neat design, very functional, and very adjustable. I was already working with Stainless Steel at this time and I thought a really slim Stainless capo would be nice with a lower silhouette and a little lighter and a little slimmer."

"The Golden Gate capo was brass and it was a big improvement over anything else I had seen at that time. I thought that stainless would be a nice improvement, so I built a few capos out of 3/16$^{th's}$ square Stainless Steel. Then I saw an early McKinney capo and I thought "wow, that's the real deal right there". So, I found some material that was dimensionally similar to the early McKinney's and started tinkering





around with it and came up with my own designs. I like the bale latch, but it had a tendency to work loose and that's how my push button came about. The push button is a more positive latching system that won't work loose. I had some experience "gunsmithing" and the design in the firing pin looked similar to what the push button does, so I used it."

At the time Phill saw his first McKinney capo he was building a D-style capo that was similar to, but more streamlined than a Golden Gate capo. "Before I built the D-style, I made C-style capos made out of Stainless Steel and I actually sold them to a few music stores in Lubbock and Amarillo. I didn't build very many. They weren't very refined, but they were equal to the others I had seen at the time. I was still experimenting with the design and the materials."

Phill grew up working in a motor machine shop and general machine shop as a young man and he gained experience by working around the shop learning to operate the machinery. He developed a deep interest in working metal, which has continued throughout his life. "After my wife and I were married we owned and operated a farm where we raised irrigated corn. I was still going back to the machine shop, which my brother owned, to tinker because I enjoyed it so much. That's the time period that I started building capos. It was a hobby to me. Then, when I sold the farms and came to Texas I couldn't wait to setup some machinery and keep on with my tinkering. This is when I moved to Rowlett, Texas and setup my machine shop in my garage."

Ex-Dallas guitar dealer (and father of the Collings Clarence White guitar) and capo builder, John Holman, is a good friend and was a big influence on Phill's capo business. "He is the first person I know of that contoured the frame of the capo to get away from the flat sides and corners on the sides. It had an appeal that I hadn't seen in other capos, including the first McKinney's. Holman's capo design incorporated a top bar with a bone insert with a rubber backing. They had an unusual sound; very crisp and pleasant."

Over the years, Phill's capo building business gradually turned into a full-time occupation. As Phill says "I don't know… it just got to where the product was nice and folks wanted to buy them at festivals and asked me to build some. I would also try to build what people needed for a specific guitar because I had my own machinery and was for the most part able to build what they needed. I also had the flexibility in my schedule because I was playing in a band and had a lot of time at home. I got my production up a bit and started to enjoy that aspect of making capos. Then a friend helped me setup a simple web site and it continued to grow. People are kind enough to recommend my product and I appreciate it and it's been a real interesting thing."

Phill builds capos for standard width necks including 1 11/16", 1 3/4", 1 13/16", 1 7/8" and custom sized neck widths. He has also built capos for classical guitars. "I try to keep records of the dimensions of guitars necks, so if a customer knows the dimensions of his instruments neck I'm happy to build them a capo. I can customize the capo for the thickness of the neck."

"The same thing goes for the banjo capos. I build a banjo B-model capo which goes up to the 5th string peg, then a C-model that will go above it. I've built capos for raduised fingerboards for a long time. I'm happy to build for pre-war necks as well as more modern necks. A nice slim fitting capo stays centered on the neck better and the player can learn to use them with one hand if the capo fits well. I just don't like one-size-fits-all capos. I like for the capo to fit and want to work with the customer to get the quality product they want."

Phill believes there is a difference in the sound between different capos. "I think if the design is good and the fit is right then you have less tuning distortion when you use the capo. It's been my view that the thicker the rubber that contacts the string, the more tuning distortion you have. I've found that with a firmer touch on the strings the more control you have on the strings. The thumbscrew mechanism helps minimize the distortion of the capo. The harder the substance that covers the top bar, which contacts the strings, the cleaner the sound as proven by the Holman capo with the bone-insert into the top bar design.

"I think there is also difference in the width of the saddle that contacts the back of the neck. The longer and wider a saddle, the more stable it will be on the back of the neck. The more contact you have, the more centered it will stay on the neck. The original McKinney's had a long wide saddle similar to mine, but they had the little four points on the outside of the frame and unless they were tucked in they had a tendency to hold very tightly to the frame and could pick at you hand a little bit, so my idea was to loop the end of the saddle and keep it as

tightly as you could against the capo frame and eliminate the sharp points. I also like the stability of the longer saddle. The later McKinney's had a short saddle and the little guide for the saddle that is a really good design.

Phill continues "the biggest influence of the sound is the material touching the string and the correct fit of the curvature of the top bar. I don't think the hardness of the metal, in the frame, would have much to do with the cleanliness of the sound from the capo. The weight of the capo would probably have more to do with it than the material hardness. There are schools of thought that go back and forth on whether the weight of the capo is of benefit to the tone and adds sustain. I've known of people adding weight to the peghead for that reason. Some folks like the sound to sustain and some folks like the note to decay a little more quickly. I prefer the note to decay a little more quickly. The longer the note sustains the more overtones I hear. So, it's really a matter of preference."

"I like the look of a polished stainless steel capo. It stays pretty for a long time and it adds to the beauty of the instrument. I see it as an extension of the metal work on the guitar or banjo and it adds a nice contrast to the wood. That's also why I also build gold plated capos—to match the gold tuners on some guitars and banjos."

"I also offer engraving. I have an engraving machine and I'm always happy to put someone's name on the capo or whatever they wish."

Phill is known for his singing and guitar playing abilities as well as his capo building expertise. Phill played guitar and sang with Billy Joe Foster and Special Edition for seven years. Playing music was a big factor in Phill moving to Texas. He says he wanted to get closer to the music that he enjoyed participating in. Phill is currently out most weekends playing festivals with the Alan Munde Gazette.

"Since November 2003, we added the McKinney-Elliott capos, which we also build and sell. I have long respected Tom's design and Tom is a very interesting fellow. I've seen some of his original prototypes that some of our customers have used for years, some neat ideas."

"As of January 1, 2005, our son, Scott has been a partner if our business. We still manufacture our parts in our own machine shop. We also hand polish every part, inside and out, on a polishing wheel. It is time consuming but gives a jewelry type finish to our capos."

When asked what plans he has for the future of his capos he responds "Mostly what I have planned is trying to keep up with orders. <laughter> So far, it's been OK, but I really like to get the product out there to folks on time. On my web site it says three weeks for orders, but it seldom takes that long to complete an order. I like to leave myself a little extra time in case something happens so I won't disappoint anybody. Sometimes I ship the same day and I seldom have more inventory than about a half a dozen. Christmas is my busiest time and it gets a little longer then, but never very long."

Phill's web site is www.elliottcapos.com and his contact information is:
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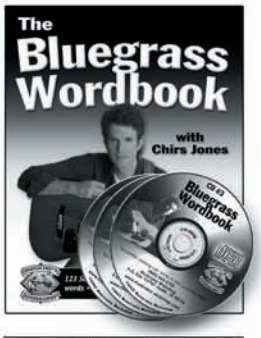

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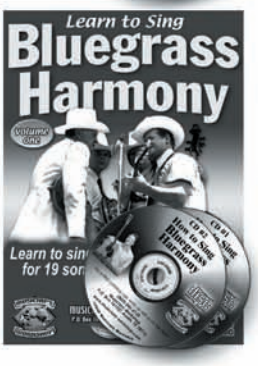

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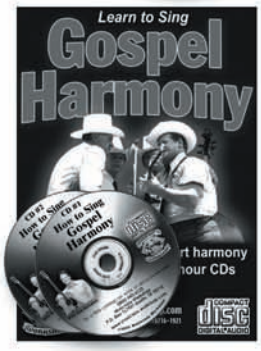

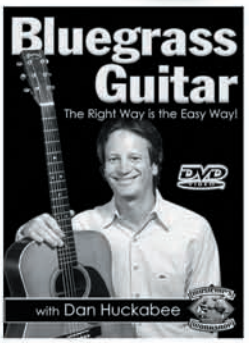

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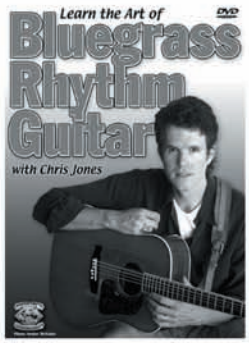

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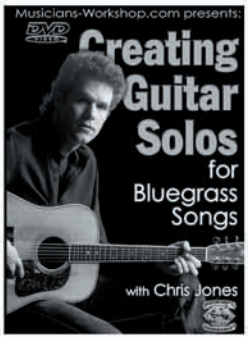

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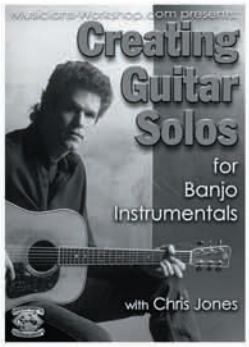

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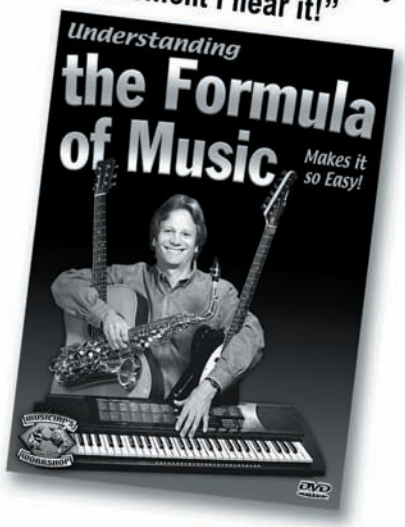

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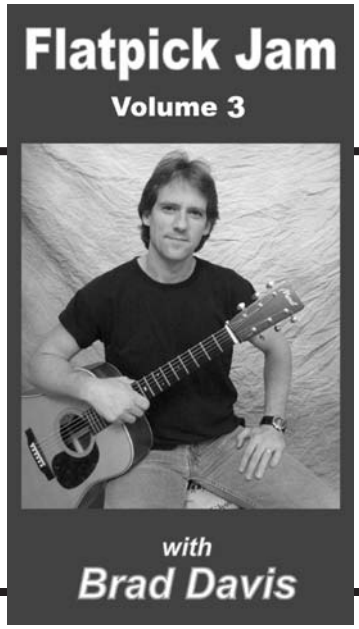

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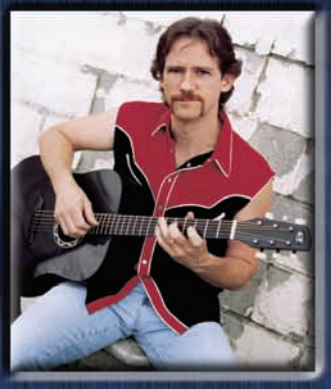

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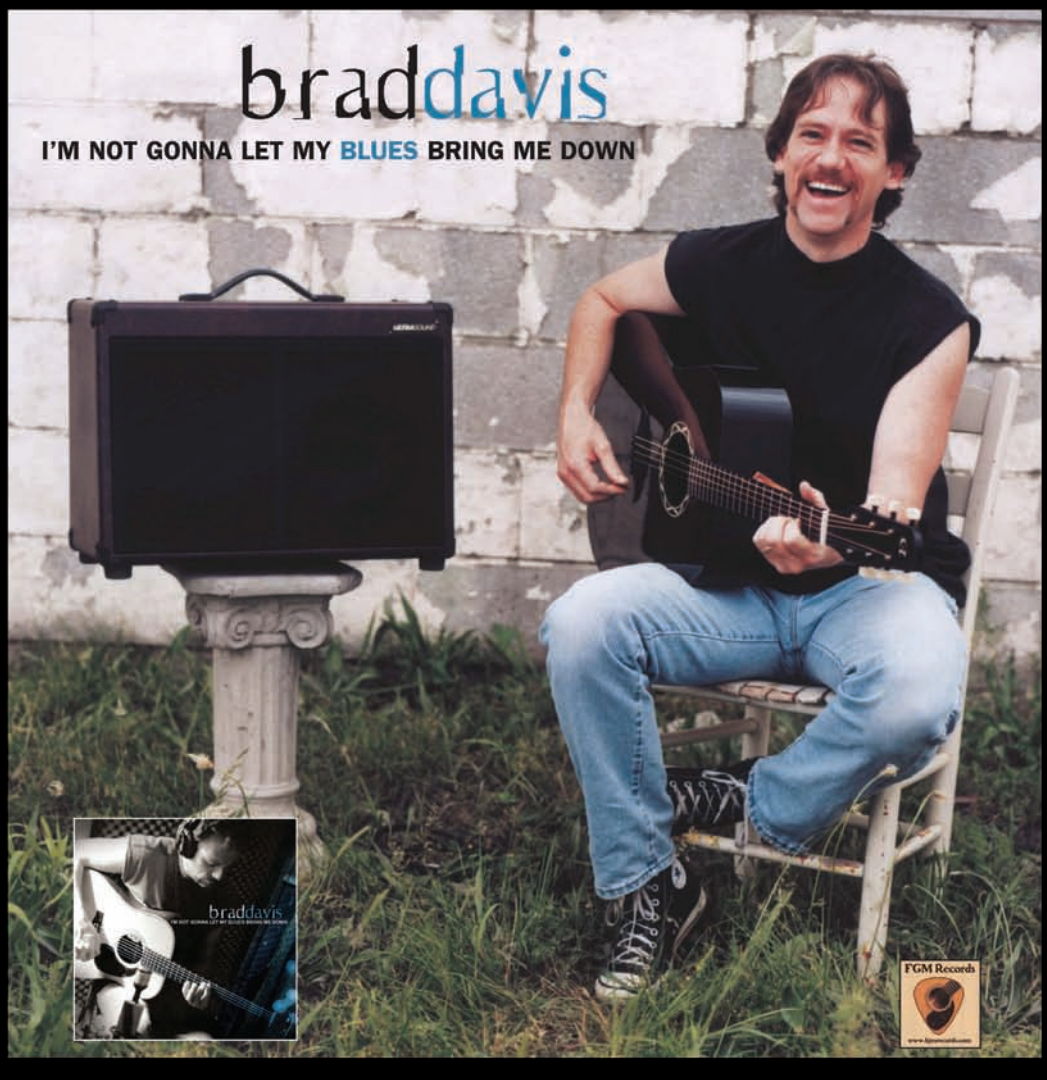

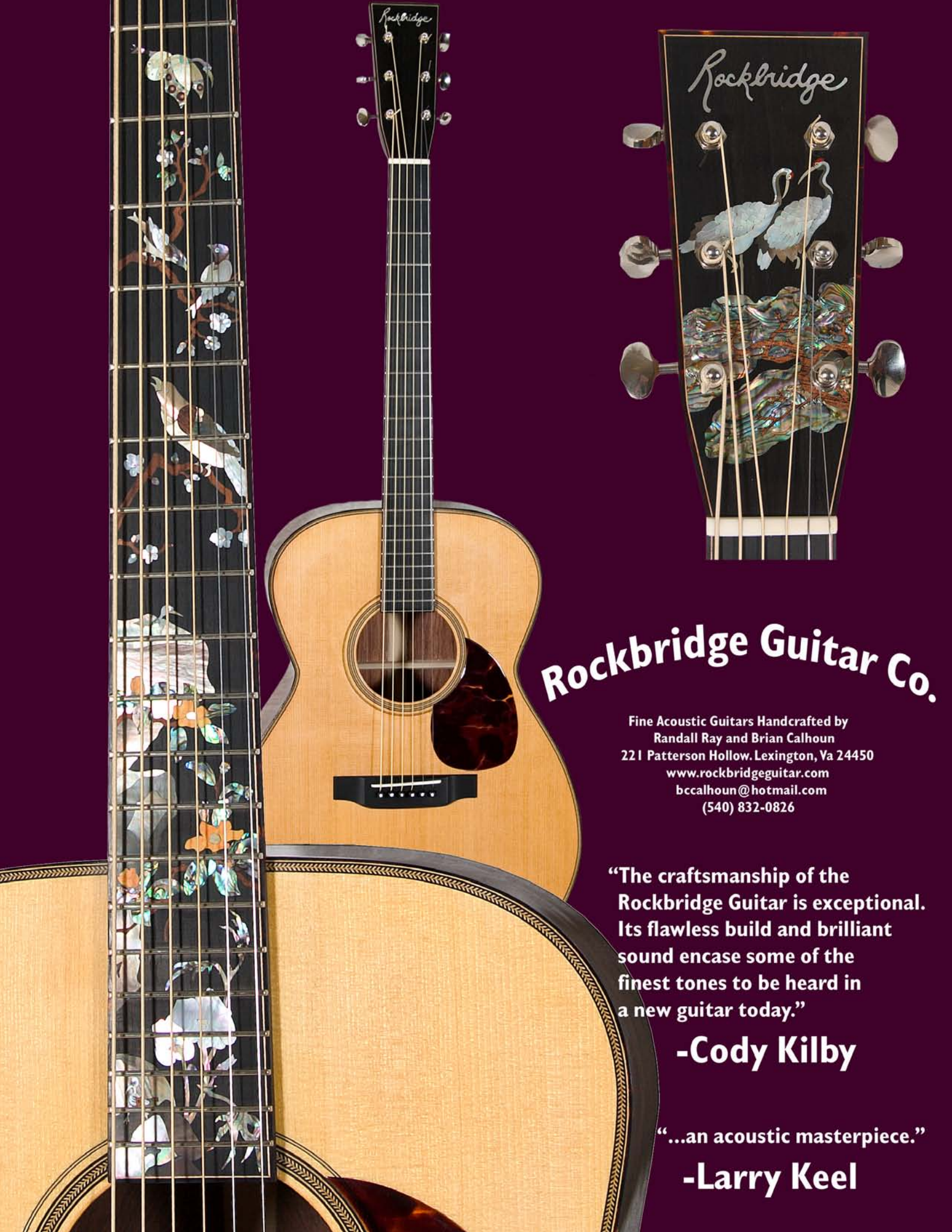

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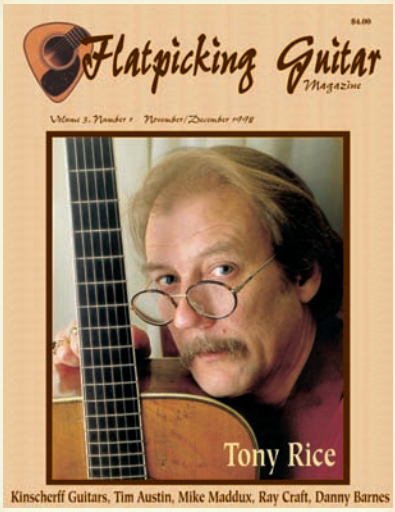

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THEY MAY HAVE BROKE DEEP AND TOOK WATER.

AND ALL THAT REMAINS IS THE FACES AND THE NAMES

OF THE WIVES AND THE SONS AND THE DAUGHTERS.

– performed on a D-18 at a memorial for the lives lost on the Great Lakes, 1998

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